

# HISTORY OF THE GRASSY BALDS IN GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK


RESEARCH/RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REPORT No. 4

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HISTORY OF THE GRASSY BALDS  
IN  
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK  
RESEARCH/RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REPORT NO. 4  
April 1976

By Mary Lindsay

Dedicated to the Memory of Florence Myers

National Park Service  
Southeast Regional Office  
Uplands Field Research Laboratory  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
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## Preface

This report summarizes briefly the historical use of the grassy balds in the Great Smoky Mountains by settlers before the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (to be referred to as GSMNP or Park) and describes their historical appearance. The main source of information is interviews with fourteen people who knew the balds before the establishment of the Park or immediately afterwards, but I also referred to published papers and books, unpublished material in the GSMNP library, old photographs, and theses. The interviews are included as an appendix, and an index has been prepared to make accessible interesting material not relevant to the subject of grassy balds. The tape recordings themselves are in the GSMNP library.

I would like to thank the many people who helped prepare this report. The people who were interviewed gave their time generously and patiently bore breakdowns of the tape recorder. Dr. Susan Bratton of the Uplands Field Research Laboratory conducted some of the interviews and gave encouragement throughout. Tina Dombrowski, Will Morgan, Leonard Terry, Warren Banner, Tim Hyatt, Jenny Adams, Andrea Behrman, and Michael Stein helped with the tedious job of transcribing the tape recordings and typing rough drafts of the transcripts. The National Park Service Southeast Region provided living and office quarters at the Uplands Laboratory

and supported the work through contract CX500050207. Dr. Peter Marks provided helpful comments on the manuscript.



Fig. 1. Tom Sparks, the herder at Spence Field, in front of his cabin (from a photograph loaned by Asa Sparks).

## The Origin of the Grassy Balds

Grassy balds are treeless, grassy meadows that occur below timberline and mostly on ridgetops in the southern Appalachian Mountains. No one knows for certain how they came to be. Even their age is not known. Many people thought that they were very old because they were mentioned in Cherokee legends (Mooney 1898). However, Gersmehl (1970) argued that the Cherokee story tellers probably incorporated details of the local landscape into their stories to make them seem more real rather than inventing the stories to explain the origin of these features and that their traditions were short-lived. Therefore, grassy balds could have been incorporated into Cherokee legends by the time people started collecting them even if white men had created the balds. Wells (1937, 1946, 1956) maintained that the Cherokees cleared the balds as hunting areas and lookout posts, but his theory is not taken seriously now. It seems unlikely that the Indians would have cleared areas so far from where they lived for game lures before white men came, for there was ample game for their needs in the valleys; and the grassy balds are much larger clearings than would be needed for lookouts.

Some naturalists have proposed various natural origins for the balds. Some objection to any of these theories can be raised. Gates's (1941) theory that oak gall wasps cleared trees from the balds cannot explain balds not surrounded by oak forest. Natural fires probably did not



# GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

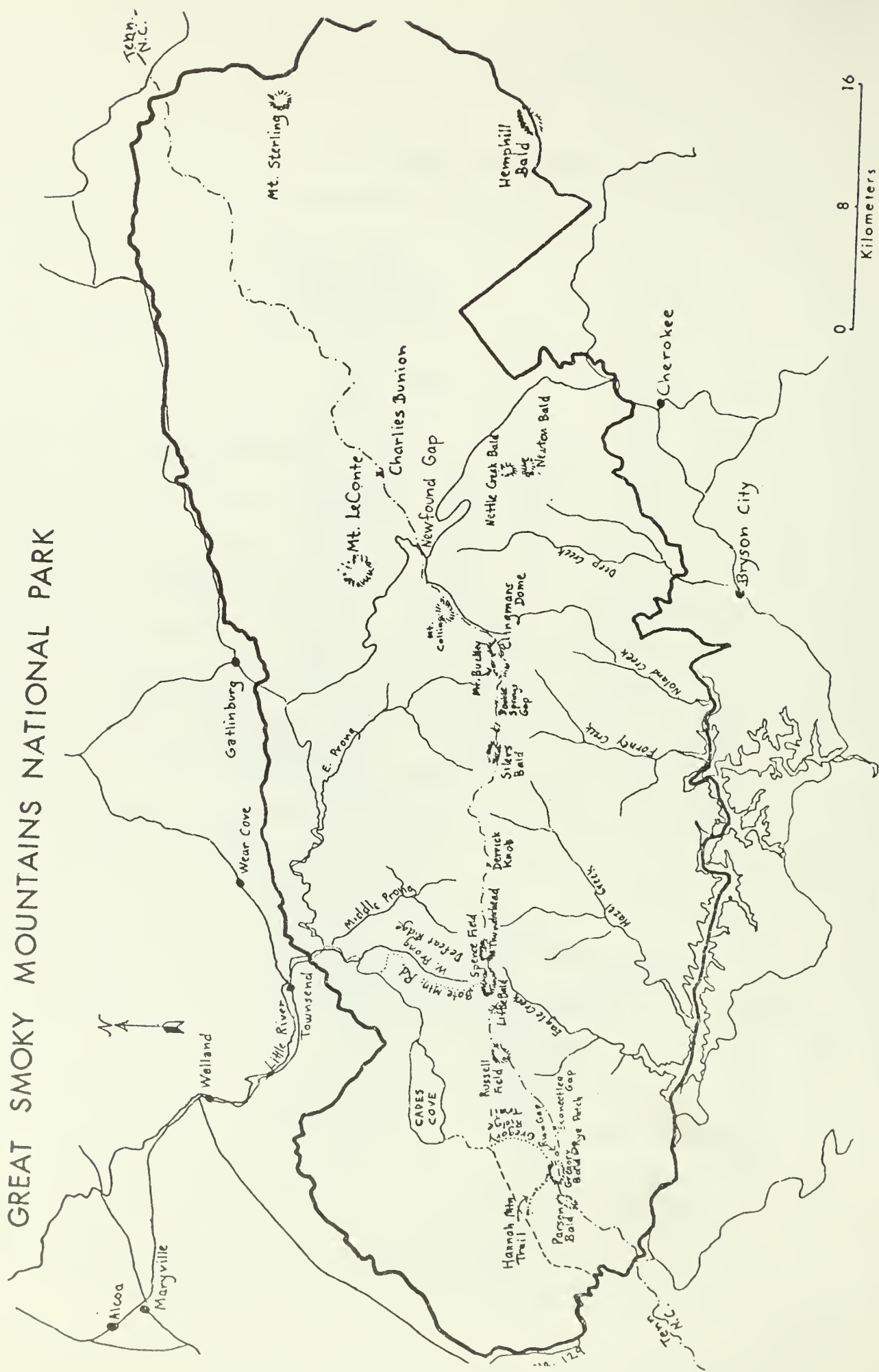


Fig. 2. Map of Great Smoky Mountains National Park showing the places mentioned in the text and in the interviews.

deforest large areas because large lightning fires which burn more than two acres are very rare (Barden, 1974).

Desiccating winds or harsh conditions are not preventing establishment of trees now, so it is unlikely that they killed off the original forest. It is possible that natural factors caused small openings which were later enlarged by the settlers.

The interviews (see Preface) suggest that at least some of the balds in the Smokies were cleared by white settlers as grazing ranges. Several published sources as well as some of the people interviewed mention that Russell Field was cleared. The date is supposed to have been in the 1870's or 1880's. Russell Gregory or some person surnamed Russell is suggested as having been responsible for clearing it. Photographs taken in 1931 show large stumps on much of the field, and at the west end it is abruptly bounded by a tall hedge of some of the largest rhododendrons I have ever seen, further suggesting artificial clearing. Much of the field was fenced, and hay was grown and mowed so that stock would be kept in a barn there through the winter.

Many people mentioned the clearing of Spence Field, and only two (James Shelton and John Waters) denied that it had been cleared in the last one or two hundred years. Asa Sparks said that his grandfather Sparks had owned it and had it cleared. He mentioned no date, but if one assumes that he and his father were born when their fathers were about



25 years old and that Granddaddy Sparks was between 25 and 40 years old when he had the field cleared, it must have been done in the 1870's or 1880's. Carlos Campbell mentioned that Dan Myers said in 1935 that it had been beech forest when he was a boy of 16, in 1870. Another veteran herder mentioned that it was forest in 1880 (Campbell, 1840). Several other people mentioned that it had been cleared and planted in grass without mentioning any date. The tradition that it was cleared seems too strong to allow much doubt that Spence Field is less than 150 years old.

Less support exists for the idea that some of the other balds of the Smokies might have been cleared. Seymour Calhoun mentioned an Old Man Siler who came out of Macon County before the Civil War and cleared a large area of the mountain top for a horse ranch, and Lawrence Crisp mentioned an Old Man Andrews who cleared Andrews Bald. Gregory has been clear a long time. Gersmehl (1970) mentions that it was indicated as "Bald Spot" on an 1833 map. Gilbert (1954) quoted Mrs. John Oliver, an old former resident of Cades Cove as saying that she "had it from folks long dead" that Gregory had always been a blueberry meadow. Paul Adams mentioned that Náte Burchfield said that he and his father had cleared some of the forest around Gregory Bald and Parson Bald, and Kermit Caughron mentioned someone's cutting a lookout on Gregory towards Cades Cove. The relative lack of information on these other balds might mean that they weren't cleared by

white settlers, but it could merely indicate that they were cleared in the late eighteenth century, very soon after the area was first settled by white men.

In using the balds as stock ranges, people gradually enlarged them. The herders and the hunters who came up in the winter cut many of the smaller trees for firewood. More trees were cut near the balds to make pens to hold livestock when they were rounded up and sorted in the fall. The trampling and browsing of the stock prevented trees from reproducing themselves, and the forest around the balds had very widely spaced trees with no undergrowth except grass. If grazing had continued until the youngest of the trees originally present around the balds died, the whole state line ridge west of Newfound Gap would probably have become bald.

Both written sources (e.g. Lambert, 1957; Gersmehl, 1970) and the people interviewed give reasons why the settlers would have found it worthwhile to clear large areas for grazing. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the population of the southern Appalachians had become large enough that level land was too valuable to be used for pasture. Removing livestock from the low farms during the summer allowed corn, hay, or other crops to be grown on land that otherwise would have been needed for pasture. Cattle that were up in the mountains did not have to be fenced out of crops. The cooler climate and lack of insects were thought to make the stock healthier. The grass was thought to be

better than that growing at lower elevations. Milk sickness, which could kill stock and people who drank their milk, was thought to be less common at higher altitudes.

#### Development and Maintenance of the Grassiness of the Balds

When an opening is made in the high elevation hardwood or spruce-fir forest, it is usually filled in with fire cherry (Prunus pensylvanica), briars (Rubus sp.), and coarse weeds. These successional species would eventually give way to a mature forest (Ramseur, 1960). The mountain oat grass (Danthonia compressa) that is typical of grassy balds occurs on burned over and logged areas only in small patches right next to a trail. For some reason the normal course of succession has not occurred on the grassy balds.

Since many balds lie in the elevation where hardwood forest and spruce-fir intergrade, Billings and Mark (1957) and Mark (1958), suggested that the balds failed to become forested because neither forest type could invade on opening successfully in this ecotonal zone. This theory does not explain why the balds became grassy rather than shrubby. Furthermore, in the absence of competition, tree species of either forest type could grow beyond the zone in which they usually occur. The present invasion of the balds by potential forest dominant species would seem to refute this theory.

The effect of grazing and browsing animals in keeping back woody plants and weeds is well known. The rapid invasion of abandoned lowland pastures by junipers and weeds

like goldenrod (Solidago spp.) is a familiar sight. Live-stock were grazed in the Smokies in sufficient numbers not only to keep woody plants and weeds from invading cleared areas but also to remove gradually all shrubs and seedlings from the understory of the surrounding forests. Most of the high ridges in the western half of what is now GSMNP were covered by a forest that many people described as resembling a forested city park or a tropical savannah. (See Fig. 3, p. 11)

Burning does not seem to have been a major factor in maintaining the balds, although the surrounding forest may have been affected. Some herders are supposed to have believed in fire as a means of improving the range and to have burned in the spring to get rid of the old grass stems and encourage new growth, but most of them evidently did not burn their ranges. The grass on the balds was kept so short by the grazing animals that there was not enough fuel to maintain a fire hot enough to kill shrubs and seedlings. The surrounding forests were sometimes burned lightly in the fall to remove the leaf litter so that chestnuts could be gathered more easily. The fires that burned through logging slash in 1925 cleared many acres, but none of these burned over areas has grown into anything resembling a grassy bald.

#### How the Settlers Grazed Their Cattle

The western half of what is now the Park was divided into several herding ranges. Some of these areas were





Fig. 3. A view of the oak forest between Spence Field and Russell Field as it looked in 1931. Note the lack of shrubs and saplings.

leased from the lumber companies, and others were evidently owned by the herders or their families. Each herder would look after two to five hundred head of cattle, a few hundred sheep, and a few horses, goats, and mules. Hogs were turned loose lower down, but a few evidently found their way onto the top of the ridge; a 1908 photograph shows some on Thunderhead. In the early twentieth century the ranges, each under a single herder or group of herders were Gregory Bald and Parson Bald and the main ridge over to Ekaneetlee Gap, Ekaneetlee Gap to somewhere east of Russell Field (which was owned by the Lawson family), Russell Field, Little Bald to the Hall cabin (located near Derrick Knob), and Hall Cabin to Clingman's Dome. The boundaries were not firmly fixed and may have changed as herders quit or got helpers.

In addition to the ranges to which families brought their herds from as far as sixty miles away to leave with the herder, there were places off the main ridge where individual families ran their own herds. The Myers family raised large herds for the market on Defeat Ridge. Places such as Hyatt Bald and Newton Bald are probably places where these families ran their stock. Hemphill Bald and other clear areas along the Cataloochee Divide were probably used by families in that area. Cattle were probably also herded on Mount Sterling.

Most families had a herd of ten to twenty cattle and maybe fifteen to twenty sheep for their own use. Families

who raised stock for market would run larger herds, up to 100. At least one lumber company, the Norwood Lumber Company, kept a herd to provide meat for its workers. Horses and mules were brought up after they were no longer needed for ploughing or other work, after the crops had been laid by. Stock would be taken up the mountain between the first of April and the first of May, depending on the weather.

In an exceptional year, a late snow might kill stock in May. If the cattle were still hot from being driven up the mountain, they would die very quickly when caught in the snow. If they went off the grassy ridge top to escape the cold, they might still die, because they would eat poisonous plants such as laurel (Kalmia latifolia) or rhododendron when they could not find grass. Bone Valley Creek, a branch of Hazel Creek, is named for the bones of the cattle that died there in the spring of 1902. The appearance of "lamb's tongue" (Erythronium americanum) was one sign that the range was ready for stock. This plant was a favored food of cattle.

After word somehow got out that the herder was ready to receive stock on his range on a certain day, the drive to the mountains would begin. For cattle going to Spence Field, the drive started in Sevierville and Maryville. Alerted by the lowing of cows and the clank of their bells, each family along the way would add its herd to the drove. Men, usually on horseback went along with the herd, and dogs

helped keep the herd in line. Some people put wire muzzles on their cattle to keep them from eating laurel. The families coming from farther away would have to stop overnight in a field. The herd would finally get on the Bote Mountain Road and onto Spence Field. The herds on Gregory and Parson probably came mostly from Cades Cove and those on the range east of the Hall Cabin from North Carolina.

When the herds reached the top the owners paid the herder for looking after the cattle. The herders charged one or two dollars a head for looking after cattle, somewhat less for sheep, and a little more for horses and mules. Their responsibilities were to put out salt and round up animals that strayed too far off during a storm. They would also get together a group of hunters to kill any bears that became a nuisance.

The sheep tended to stay together on the top of the bald, out in the open grass. They were therefore easy to care for, but they could be killed in large numbers by bears or lightning. Cattle tended to wander off in the woods, and stayed within a reasonable distance of the bald only because that was where salt was put out for them. At least one cow in each family's herd would have a bell on it so that the herd could be found more easily if it strayed.

Mid-September was the time for taking the stock off the mountains. The owners would come up, pick their animals out of the herd, and take them down. The rounding up and sorting



took three or four days. This gathering in was evidently almost as much fun as it was work. Even people who had no cattle on the range would come up to help and join in the evening meal of a donated steer roasted by a designated cook and the drinking of moonshine in the evenings. The owners of the stock would often take bushels of chestnuts down to their families.

The cattle were herded into pens that enclosed from one to four acres. These pens were called "gant lots" because during the two or three days they might be confined in it, the cattle became gaunt. This gaunting was partially intentional. The settlers believed that eating lush grass all summer made the cattle somewhat bloated and that they would do better on the way down if they were underfed for a few days before.

The gant lots were built at one end of the range. They would be surrounded by a brush fence made of untrimmed trees piled together, or by a rail fence. The gant lot on Russell Field was supposedly made of barbed wire. The lot would have a division running almost all the way across through the middle. Where one end of this partition joined the outside fence, there would be a gateway of removable rails to the other side of the partition and another to the outside of the lot. The cattle would be driven around the lot and past the gate. If an owner claimed them, they were let out of the lot. Otherwise they were driven back through the other

gate to the other side of the lot (Kara Gregory in Brewer 1976).

The animals were marked with various cuts in their ears, tattoos on the ear, or, in the case of the Myers family, with rings in their ears. Branding with hot irons was not used because the brands tended to become inflamed. These markings enabled the owners to pick out their own cows and aided in settling disputes.

The herds were not taken down in September because of any shortage of forage. There was adequate grass to feed the cattle through October. The Caughrons of Cades Cove drove their herd up for another month to save hay. One reason for taking the cattle down early was fear that they would develop milk sickness. This disease would kill stock and anyone who drank the milk of an affected animal. The settlers didn't know the cause, although some suspected that it was due to cattle's licking up a salty poisonous mineral or eating grass on places that had been struck by lightning. It was supposed to be most prevalent in certain dark, low, moist coves, and some of these areas were fenced to keep out cattle. According to Kingsbury (1964) milk sickness is caused by Eupatorium rugosum, white snakeroot, which seems to be as common around the balds as it is anywhere else. However, it is more resistant to frost kill than the grasses, and if the cattle were left up too long, they might be more likely to eat it because it would be the only green thing left.

When milk sickness did occur, it was late in the season.

Eupatorium may have been much less common at high altitudes than it is now. Old photographs show no Eupatorium in habitats where it is now abundant.

Cattle would also get sick from eating laurel (Kalmia) and rhododendron. The usual treatment was to feed the animal a piece of fat meat and wait for it to vomit, but this treatment would fail if it was applied too late.

Lightning would occasionally claim several sheep at one time. Cattle would get off the top during a storm, but sheep would huddle together in the open and get struck. About all the owners could do would be to go up and salvage some wool by pulling it off the dead sheep. Bears would occasionally get even full-grown cattle by cornering them and were evidently a serious threat to sheep. Probably only their low numbers and fear of man kept them from causing so much trouble as to make herding in the mountains uneconomical. Before the twentieth century cougars (known locally as panthers or "painters") would occasionally kill a few animals, but the one herder Tom Sparks stabbed after it jumped onto his back in about 1902 was probably the last one seen.

### The Herder's Life

The chronology and geography of who herded where and when are not very clear. Tom Sparks evidently had charge of the Spence Field range which extended from Little Bald to the

Hall Cabin, from the late 1890's to 1926. His son-in-law, Fonce Cable, was herding at Russell Field in 1931 and may have taken over the Spence Field range after Tom Sparks was shot (Evidently, Sparks had a somewhat simple-minded boy helping him make whiskey whom he was teasing. Jokingly encouraged by an onlooker, this boy picked up a gun and shot Sparks.). Long-haired, long-bearded Nate Burchfield had the Gregory range in the 1920's. The range from the Hall Cabin to Clingman's Dome was leased from a lumber company by Granville Calhoun until about 1910. In the last years before the Park was established various people from Cades Cove such as Kermit Caughron or the Oliver family ran herds near Gregory Bald. The herders herded only in the summer. The rest of the year they had other occupations, including hunting, moonshining, or working for the logging companies.

The herder's daily routine would include putting out salt and checking to see if animals of a particular herd were missing. (This last job was possible because an individual owner's herd would tend to stay together). Besides being necessary for the well-being of the animals, salt kept the cattle from wandering too far off the mountain. Loose salt was placed on flat rocks or in hollows cut in a fallen tree. If cows were grazing or moving around, their bells would enable the herder to tell that they were nearby, and he would call them to the salt by yelling something like, "Hooooooo-cow!" or "Sue-coooooow!" If they came up, he could check on the

condition of that particular herd. If cattle scattered during a storm or were stampeded by a bear, the herder would have to look for them, even if they had gone five miles down the mountain. He would notify people at the bottom of the mountain when a bear caused trouble by killing stock, and a hunting party would come up to get it.

The herder hunted to supplement his diet of corn meal, beans, and fat pork with squirrels and turkeys--he seldom went out for the day without his rifle. Some herders fenced small plots near their cabins to grow cabbage and potatoes, which grew well despite the cool climate. They usually went down to their homes every week to pick up more supplies.

Herders stayed in small one- or two-room wooden cabins near the top of the mountain and a good spring. The cabin had a fireplace and chimney made of rocks daubed with mud usually a puncheon floor, a built-in bed and table, and a few chairs. The cabins seldom lasted many years because hunters using them in the late fall and winter would build larger fires than the fireplaces could take and burn down the cabin.

Hikers and other people coming up the mountain could usually count on the herder's hospitality. The beds were built to hold up to ten people. Some of the herders evidently became somewhat upset when people took too much of their food, but they enjoyed company.



Moonshining was another activity that several herders engaged in. The stills were located down the mountain on a branch with good water. Tom Sparks at Spence Field, Fonze Cable at Russell Field, and Nate Burchfield near Gregory were among those who made whiskey.

Families that cared for their own herds did not have a family member living on the mountain. Instead, they used to send someone up once a week or so to put out some salt.

### Historical Appearance of the Balds

Even forty years after the cessation of grazing, the grassy balds present a striking contrast to the forests surrounding them. Long grass covers much of their area, and only a few small trees block the view. Only someone who knew their appearance before the Park was established could be aware how rapidly succession to a forest community has proceeded on most of them.

Photographs taken before the Park was established show that trees and shrubs were almost completely absent from the center of the balds, and the very few shrubs present were heavily browsed by sheep and cattle. The edges of the balds were a lot farther from the center. The northeast edge of Gregory Bald was so much farther downhill that Cades Cove could be seen clearly over the tops of the trees. This view is now completely blocked by the trees that have grown up since.

The open parts of the balds were covered almost entirely with grass. Tall weeds such as goldenrods, Angelica, and asters and low creeping weeds like cinquefoil (Potentilla sp.) and sheep sorrel (Rumex acetosella) were very uncommon. The blueberries (Vaccinium spp.) that are now so common on most of the balds were present only around the edges. A few serviceberry (Amelanchier laevis) trees grew around the edges of some of the balds, but they were far less abundant than they are today. Hawthorns (Crataegus sp.) were present on Andrews Bald but absent from Gregory Bald where they are now the most aggressive invaders of the grassy area.

Around the balds (except possibly for Andrews) the forest consisted of a few large, widely spaced old trees, usually oak (Quercus sp.), beech (Fagus grandifolia) or yellow birch (Betula lutea). Chestnut was also very important in the high-elevation forests before the blight killed it all. Years of trampling and browsing by stock kept the understory clear. Since trees that died were not replaced, the forest became more and more open and the balds larger. The woods all along the main ridge and the tops of the side ridges had this park-like aspect except, perhaps, where the understory was laurel or rhododendron. Places such as Newton Bald which now do not seem to deserve the name "Bald" at all were probably also covered by this sort of forest.

The wide spaces between the old trees have now been filled in with small pole trees about 10 to 20 cm (4 to 8

inches) in diameter. Shrubs and tree seedlings are abundant. The under canopy is too dense to allow grass to grow, and typical forest herbs now carpet the ground.

One of the outstanding attractions of the Smokies is the display of azaleas on Gregory Bald. Before the Park was established, Harlan Kelsey, a horticulturist who was on the committee to choose possible sites for a National Park in the east, thought that the flame azalea display on and around Gregory Bald was the best in the country. Even in 1899 the azalea display was impressive (Eakin, 1949). While Gregory was still being grazed, the azaleas were confined to a rim around the edge, mostly on the southwest side. They have since spread out onto the open part of the bald. Stock probably did not eat azaleas since they are distasteful and poisonous (Kingsbury, 1964), but their trampling would probably have prevented the establishment of new plants except very close to a parent plant. The azaleas evidently reached the peak of the showiness in the 1950's. Even though their numbers may have increased since then, the filling in of the edges of the bald with saplings and shrubs has almost hidden them from view.

The balds responded rapidly to the cessation of grazing. The grass, which had been kept clipped down to a few inches, grew knee high the first year after grazing was stopped. In 1936, five years after grazing on Andrews Bald was stopped, the Chief Ranger of GSMNP noticed invasion by blueberries



and predicted that the bald would eventually revert to forest (Eakin, 1936). Andrew is being invaded more slowly by trees and shrubs than any other bald, so shrubs may have appeared even sooner on other balds. In a letter written in 1938, George Stephens complained that Silers Bald and Thunderhead where grazing was stopped before 1918 and in 1933 respectively (although Granville Calhoun may have stopped herding other people's cattle before 1918, it is quite likely that cattle belonging to other people in North Carolina who just let their herds out lower down might have found their way up there) were matted with wild strawberry (Potentilla?), weeds and briars, and that beech and other small trees were filling in. The grass cover under the open forest was evidently persisting at that time. Changes in the vegetation of the balds were noticeable only five years after grazing was stopped.

Invasion of the grassy balds by trees is continuing. Less than half of the original area of Gregory Bald is still grassy--blueberries have grown over most of its area, and the blueberry patches seem to provide shelter from severe conditions, for many trees seem to start in blueberry patches. Balds that are surrounded by beech forests, such as Thunderhead or Silers, are rapidly being taken over by beech sprouts which grow so densely that one can hardly walk between them. If no action is taken to set back and hold back their invasion by woody plants, the balds will almost certainly be no more than a memory by the end of this century.

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Lambert, Robert S., 1957. The pioneer history of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. A report to the Superintendent based on documentary sources. 76 pp.

Stephens, George M., July 12, 1938. Letter to GSMNP Superintendent Eakin.

## APPENDIX

### TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

Except for the omission of such things as remarks about the functioning of the tape recorder, response to outside noises, and so forth, these are exact transcripts of the conversations unless there is a note to the contrary. No attempt has been made to reproduce pronunciation exactly.

Roy Myers, lifetime resident of Tuckaleechee Cove, former logger and farmer, 84 years old, Mrs. Myers, 81 years old. Interviewed by Susan Bratton, GSMNP biologist at their home in Townsend, May 15, 1975

RM: My name is Roy Myers. Born August the sixth, eighteen and eighty-nine.

SB: Okay, Boney, want to talk about your father's cattle for awhile?

RM: Talk about Dad's cattle?

SB: Yeah, talk about your father's cattle. How many did he have all together?

RM: Oh, I don't know. He'd take 75. I think the most we ever had out there was about ninety something. I don't know.

SB: Are those cows with calves, milk cows, beef cows?

RM: There wasn't many cows along. There's yearlings and two-year-olds and calves that was weaned. Eight or nine months old, he'd buy 'em up, you know, in the fall and winter.

(pause)

SB: You carried salt up on the mountains for those cattle, did you?

RM: Oh, I rode a mule, got up there, yeah.

SB: How old were you when you started doing that?

RM: Oh, I don't know, 'bout fourteen.

SB: Where did you take the salt?

RM: Up to where the cattle was.

SB: Was that up on Defeat Ridge?

RM: Yeah.

SB: How high up did you take that salt? Just to the Blowdown?

RM: Naw. Took it to the Devil's Nest, Eve's Garden, Chestnut Flats, Blowdown, Coffeepot Hollow, Elder Hollow. There's where your cattle run.

SB: Did they run all the way to the top of the ridge?

RM: Oh yeah. They'd go up to the top of the ridge. Hot weather, they'd eat out on the top when it got hot.

SB: And they were just running in the woods. Did you ever clear any openings for 'em, or did they just find whatever they could to eat?

RM: Oh, they just went around the hillsides themselves and off in them hollers. Move 'em from one holler to the other. I'd move 'em, sort 'em and bring some I was going to bring in. Along in August, the big ones going to sell, pasture them two or three weeks.

SB: Okay. When did they take all the cattle up to Spence Field?

RM: Oh, I'd say the first of May.

SB: Did sheep and horses go up all at the same time?

RM: Oh yeah. They'd take 'em all up, maybe a week or ten days going up there, but they'd go up, all up. That was when they opened, the first of May. The herder took charge of 'em.

FM: I thought they took them earlier.

RM: Well, they used to, but. . . . They took them the first of April, but I told you the weather got changed, they had to froze to death, nothing for 'em to eat up there.

SB: So they just waited because of the weather?

RM: Yeah, They used to plant corn all the time in this country in the first of March. Now they don't plant it till way up in April, I mean the last of March.

SB: Okay. When did they take the cattle down? The first of September?

RM: That's when they brought them off here, off of the Spence Place.

SB: Did they bring all the cattle down from the ridge at the same time? Did they bring them down from Gregory Ridge at the same time?

RM: Yeah. It was roundup time.

SB: And were they all taken to Knoxville then to be sold?



RM: No, the farmers took 'em home with 'em. Half of 'em they wanted to keep home, maybe they wanted to feed 'em, put 'em on feed, and sell 'em about the first of the year, the big ones.

SB: Where did you sell them when you sold them?

RM: Oh, sold 'em in Knoxville. Lot of 'em took 'em, shipped 'em to Baltimore, had enough of 'em to get a carload of 'em.

SB: So they drove the cattle from here to Knoxville?

RM: Oh yes.

SB: Did you ever go on any of those drives?

RM: Oh, I took 'em up, my daddy's cattle over there lots of times.

SB: How long did it take you to go from here to Knoxville with the cows?

RM: Oh, you leave, a day, you drive in a day.

SB: And then you'd spend a day coming back?

RM: Yeah. If you didn't get drunk.

SB: Were the cattle auctioned or did you sell them to a buyer?

RM: Oh, sell 'em to a pinhooker, auction 'em, sell them; either one you want, give 'em away . . .

SB: Okay. Who took their cows to Spence?

RM: Oh, Lord, I don't know. They come out of Sevier County, Knox County, Blount County, all these here counties.

SB: So how many different families, do you think?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't know.

SB: A hundred, two hundred?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't think that many, no.

SB: Thirty, forty families, maybe?

RM: Maybe fifty.

SB: Go through the part again about how they told the cattle apart. How did the families recognize whose cattle were whose?

RM: Well, the ears were marked different ways: swallow forks, underbits, splits, ear splits . . .

SB: How did your father mark his?

RM: With a hog ring in each ear.

SB: Brass hog ring.

RM: Yeah.

SB: He was the only one in the whole mountains who did that?

RM: The only one I ever seen.

SB: Wasn't that more expensive than clipping their ears? Did they ever lose those rings?

RM: Why, Lord no. A steer with his ears cut all to pieces, he didn't look good. They wouldn't buy one for a feeder.

SB: So you could just pull those rings out again before you took them to market.

RM: Oh, just leave the rings in there. Wherever they went, whenever they butchered. . . . They didn't even flinch hardly when you snapped that hog ring in their ears.

SB: Did any of the cows have bells on them?

RM: Oh, Lord, my daddy belled every one of his'n.

SB: All the cows were belled.

RM: He put a bell on every one of 'em.

SB: Were all the cows at Spence Field belled?

RM: Oh no, no.

SB: Did some of the cows at Spence Field have bells?

RM: Oh, Lord, yes. Oh, I'd say over half of 'em was belled.

SB: What about the sheep?

RM: Oh, there'd be one or two out of a bunch belled.

SB: So what they'd do, each herd of sheep, they'd put maybe one bell on one sheep?



RM: Oh, no. They'd just . . . A man took twenty-five or thirty, he'd just put one bell on his'n; then they was marked too, just like the cattle.

SB: How many sheep, cattle, and horses were there in, say, the Spence Field area, between Little Bald and going up over Thunderhead, maybe not all the way down to Derrick?

RM: They run from the Russell Place down here, up below the Russell Field to the Derrick, and the bald in to the Tennessee River, a man had that from Gregory Bald to Tennessee River.

SB: Who were the herders up there?

RM: Well, the last one up there was Cable, Fonze Cable, but old Tom Sparks herded up there for years.

SB: How young was he when he started herding?

RM: I don't know. He was an old man when I was a boy.

SB: Did he ever tell you, did you ever meet him, or did he ever tell any stories about things that happened up there?

RM: Oh, yeah.

SB: Do you remember any of those?

RM: Yeah, I remember a lot of 'em.

SB: Got any good stories about things that happened on Spence Field when they were driving cattle up there?

RM: Well, this one . . . He (Tom Sparks) lived in Cades Cove. This is the best one . . . They come out of North Carolina over to Tennessee, get lost on Smoky Mountain, and he would come home every weekend, Saturday night, and go back Sunday night, Sunday evening. Go back Sunday night, and he was late a-gettin' goin' back, and hit a laurel thicket. He told me, he said he heard a fuss a-comin', never heard nothin' like it, said he'd stop and listen, kept goin' up till he met it, and there was a woman. Somebody brought her up there, and she had a six months old baby. Lost, and she couldn't find the way off. Finally found it off, it was dark. And he said, he told her, said, "Give me that baby," said, "Take hold of my shirt tail," says, "I'll take you back to the top of Smoky Mountain." Took her back. Greatest tale old Tom ever told me.

SB: What year do you think that happened in?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't know.

SB: Back Civil War time?

Myers 6

RM: Oh no. It was way since then. It was way since the Civil War. It's been 65, 75 years ago, I guess.

SB: It would be about 1900, maybe.

RM: Yeah. Maybe before. I never asked him when he was telling me what year it was.

SB: Did they ever lose any cattle up there? Some must have died during the summer.

RM: Oh yeah. Died and get killed by the lightning.

SB: They had a lot of lightning strikes?

RM: Oh several. Yeah, I've seen 'em killed.

SB: Large numbers at a time?

RM: Oh no. Three or four.

SB: Three or four? Did that happen every year?

RM: Oh yes.

SB: What about the sheep? Did they ever get struck by lightning?

RM: I never did see any sheep get struck by lightning. Horses sometimes would get killed, or I reckon somebody would steal 'em. They'd come up missing.

SB: So you figure somebody walked off with 'em. Did they ever catch anybody stealing horses, cattle, or sheep out of these woods up here?

RM: No, not in my lifetime, naw.

SB: Why was that? I'd think people would be stealing them.

RM: Well, I guess they do now, but not in my lifetime, not when I fooled with 'em. I looked after 'em.

SB: Who all stayed up there to herd them? Just one or two herders or a lot of 'em? How many people were up there total, usually?

RM: Just one, one herder. But going back into parts of North Carolina, this sawmill and that one, North Carolina and they'd stay there. Old Tom always had company. Always had a lot of beets. Old Tom told me I was the only man ever brought anything up there to eat passing by.

SB: What did Boney forget to say?

FM: About what he done to the woman when he got her back up there.

RM: He said that he took the woman back to the top of Smoky. Well, he took her back to the cabin and let her stay all night, then she could come out in daylight.

FM: Show her the way off, the road.

SB: Got any more stories that the herder told you? Are there any about interesting things that happened on the balds, like on Spence or on Russell?

RM: Well, oh Lord, old Tom, feller killed old Tom up there.

SB: Really? What happened then?

RM: I don't know. It was a drunken racket, I reckon. Feller shot poor old Tom Sparks. That was before . . .

SB: What year was that?

RM: I don't know.

SB: Was it before World War I?

RM: Oh, I don't know that. I know I was a man. I don't know what year it was. It's been forty or fifty years ago.

SB: Well, it had to be before the Park was started, so maybe it was in the twenties. Did they have a still or something up around there?

RM: Oh, they made whiskey there all the time.

SB: At Spence Field.

RM: Somebody did, yeah. They didn't stay with old Tom. They had cabins in them hollers of their own, those whiskey makers.

SB: Were the whiskey makers' cabins way up on, way up on the hillsides, way up near Spence Field?

RM: Naw, they was down in them hollers, where there's water.

SB: So if somebody up there wanted to get drunk, they could do it anytime they wanted to.

RM: I reckon, if they had the money to pay for it.

SB: You were telling me about a little white steer of your father's who used to get into the mash.

RM: I don't know how I started in to tell you that. That still was up on the Middle Prong of the Little River, above Townsend. My Daddy had an old white stag he bought from some feller. He'd drink a fifty-gallon of mash every night. Drive him two miles from one holler to another, but he'd come back that night. They build a fence out of it around him; he couldn't get in to get to the mash, but he got good and fat. That liquor or mash made him fat.

SB: Let's go back to the number of cows. How many cows do you think there were on Spence Field? Did you say 1500 was about right? Or up through that whole area?

RM; Oh, I wouldn't know how to guess. I know two or three bunches brought over a hundred head at a time and the fellers would go up and take forty, fifty head at a time. I wouldn't know how to guess on the cattle. I never did ask. I've been there at rounding time at the gant lot. Had bullpens where the old bulls come in, put 'em in the bullpen, lay down the logs, keep 'em from tearing the fence down overnight.

SB: How many cattle did those pens hold, and where were they?

RM: Right on top of the mountain.

SB: They put them right on the open part of the field?

RM: Yeah.

SB: How did they do that? They just bring out a bunch of logs from the woods at the time they needed the pens, then take them down?

RM: Yeah. Split rails. Generally them old rails was there would last for five years.

SB: So they built the pens only when the cattle were up there. Or were the pens there all the time?

RM: Oh, the wind 'd blow 'em down in the winter time. They'd go, and they'd lay them back up. Maybe have to make more rails, cut poles.

SB: How big around were these pens?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't know. Couple of acres, an acre, anyway.

SB: So they just left the fencing out in the field and let the cattle graze in there?



RM: Wasn't nothing in there to graze. No water either. They'd eat it up, and some of them cattle stay in there for two or three days, and you'd have one to come in there and stay in there till the rest of 'em come. You wouldn't leave but just one head.

SB: So they'd go down in the woods and try to bring the cows in?

RM: Drive 'em in, yeah.

SB: And they'd drive 'em up on to Spence Field and up on to Russell Field?

RM: Yeah. I never was at the Russell Field roundup time.

SB: Did your father's cows get rounded up in that Spence Field roundup?

RM: No, no. Our cattle were down here on this Defeat Ridge. Wasn't nobody's cattle down there but ours.

SB: So your cattle were all by themselves, and you just brought them in yourselves?

RM: By themselves, yeah.

SB: But you went and helped with the roundup at Spence Field?

RM: Oh, I went up to be with the gang. I liked to be up there.

SB: Did you all get drunk at the roundup too?

RM: No, I never did get drunk.

SB: How old were you when you first started going up to the roundup at Spence Field?

RM: Oh, I don't know.

SB: Fourteen? Fifteen?

RM: Oh, I was older than that. I'd say I was, eighteen or nineteen.

SB: How many people went to that roundup? Lots?

RM: Everybody that had cattle. And they'd take drivers with 'em to help 'em drive 'em home.

SB: So that's what, a couple of hundred people, maybe?



RM: Oh, I don't know, no, not that many. Old Man MacMahan out of Sevier County brought a hundred head every year, and old Pete Sarrat out of Sevier County brought a hundred head every year. Old MacMahan had white faced cattle. Feller out of North Carolina had some strays, said it was his, his mark. It was his marked. He didn't think about hog rings. He rode up just about the time Sparks (unintelligible) getting his out to leave. Old Man Sparks ahead he was arguing with him. He asked old man MacMahan, he says, "Is that not your steer?" He said he looked like it. He says, "Run him in that bull-pen." Says, "Catch him there, Roy." Took his ears by the thumb and his initials in there. Sparks looked at Calhoun and said, "When did you start spelling your name with an 'M'?" Yeah. Old man . . . That's the first one I'd ever seen marked in his ear. They got it that the last years, though, had a machine to put your initials in his ear. He had to wet his thumb and rub the wax off that old steer's ear.

SB: It was tattooed, was it?

RM: No. They got some kind of machine like this here . . .

SB: So back to the numbers. How many cattle, total? Fifteen hundred, maybe, and that many sheep?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't know. Why, Lord, yeah. Hogs, sheep, horses, and cattle.

SB: How many horses, about?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't know. Fifty or seventy-five mules and horse colts.

SB: Yearlings mostly up there?

RM: Yeah, and two-year-olds. They never took no yearlings.

SB: Did the herder have a dog?

RM: Oh yes, he had a dog.

SB: Was it a herding dog or just a dog for company?

RM: Dog for company and a cat for company.

SB: Did he have any chickens or anything up there?

RM: No.

SB: No chickens. How many hogs were there up there?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't know how many hogs. Them hogs stayed up there all winter, part of 'em.

SB: Stayed right up around Spence Field and in the forests around there?

RM: Off in them hollers. And them fellers out of Cades Cove go up and feed 'em come a snow.

SB: What would they feed them with?

RM: Corn.

SB: They'd feed 'em corn?

RM: Yeah, but they'd eat chestnuts and acorns.

SB: So they'd just leave 'em up on the mountain?

RM: Yeah.

SB: When did they butcher, usually? Did they butcher in the fall?

RM: Oh, yeah. They'd bring 'em . . . Got big enough . . . Like these wild hogs, how many of them do you guess is in the Park?

SB: Don't know. Couple of thousand, maybe. They're just getting over into Cataloochee about. They haven't gone all the way up into the Carolina side . . .

RM: Finally take this Park over.

SB: Yeah, they're just about to finish up this year.

RM: Government ain't got sense enough to know how to get rid of 'em.

SB: Nope. We were talking about burning before. We were talking about fires. Did they ever burn Spence or Russell or Gregory that you ever remember?

RM: I don't know whether them balds . . . I know they never was burned. There wasn't nothing there to burn.

SB: The grass was clipped down too short by the grazing?

RM: Them sheep and horses'd eat it up.

SB: So they didn't burn in the fall, and they didn't burn in the spring before they brought up the cattle, did they?

RM: Naw. They burnt it in the fall to pick up chestnuts. Burn the leaves so they could see chestnuts.

SB: So they burned the chestnut and oak forests just real light so you get a ground fire that would burn off those leaves?

RM: Why, you take it where ther's chestnuts, and where there wasn't no chestnuts . . . You set the mountains afire, it didn't just burn where the chestnuts was. It burnt the whole durn thing.

SB: Did it burn down in these coves?

RM: Oh, yes.

SB: Did it burn down in the ones that weren't cut over, like on the Butler tract? You know those real wet areas down at the bottom with the big hemlocks? Did those burn?

RM: Oh yeah. Burnt everywhere. Got dry . . .

SB: That had to be a ground fire was it? Just a fire through the laurel? In those low coves?

RM: Why, you take it, and it's right dry. Some man set a match to it, couldn't put it out, wind a-blowin'. That March wind a-blowin' sent it from one ridge to another, under your feet. You'd better be runnin'.

SB: Do you remember any real big fires up on the ridges up here? Like on Gregory Ridge or up that way?

RM: Oh Lord yeah. I knowed it up here at the Blowdown. Had all them CCC's out of North Carolina and Tennessee, too, a-fightin' that fire.

SB: Did you fight that fire?

RM: Oh, I was a-workin' for the government then. Yeah, I went.

SB: Was that a real hot fire?

RM: Oh, hot. Didn't know how to fight it, but that's another thing the government didn't know how to do. I told 'em the way they was fightin' it . . . I'd just set the whole thing afire and send it to North Carolina.

SB: Where did that fire start? Do you know?

RM: Oh, I don't know. Somebody set it out, throwed out a match to see it burn.

SB: What year was that?

RM: Thirty-six, wasn't it, Mother? When I was up there fightin' that fire. It was before I went to work for the (Alcoa) plant in thirty-six. Thirty-six, when North Carolina and Tennessee was full of them peckerwoods. Peckerwood army, CCC's.

SB: How big was that fire?

RM: Aw, I don't know how big it was, how many acres. It burnt over the whole mountains.

SB: Do you know how far it went from east to west, north to south?

RM: No I don't. I know the government men all come out of Washington. So you're ain't never goin' to show this to a government man?

SB: No.

RM: They brought pumps down here, pumps you could carry on your back in five-gallon cans, hoses. It'd pump water five hundred feet up, take a barrel up there to water out the stumps before the fire was done burned over and gone.

SB: Do you remember any big fires earlier than that, like when you were a boy? In the early nineteen hundreds or twenties?

RM: I know one where this West Prong burned up. I don't know which year it was. I guess about 1908 or 1909, wasn't it.

SB: They just let that fire burn? They didn't try to fight it?

RM: They didn't try to fight it.

SB: That had already been cut over, so that was a fire on logging slash, was it?

RM: Goin' up that river, every flat place they hit, they built a bridge for a train to go over. The steel was took up. They left them old strainers and pens up there, and they burnt them all down. Killed all the fish in the West Prong. The railroad was there. The steelers took it up; it was done.

SB: That was after they finished cutting. Were you working for the logging company then?

RM: No.

SB: They logged the West Prong first, and then they logged up around above Elkmont later?

RM: West Prong first, then the East next, and wound up on the Middle Prong.

SB: And then the Park was started and that was the end of that?

RM: Oh, the Park here was quarrelin' about it before they got into Elkmont.

SB: That was Townsend who ran that logging company, was it?

RM: Little River Lumber Company. Oh, they first come here talking about the Park. The company didn't want them to come, and they sent government men here and said they were going to take a mile from the top of the mountain down. Then they finally settled, and they come down 300 feet from the top and cut everything below there. Then the government went ahead to look at it. They'd just go back up . . .

SB: But they left the beech forest on the top of the ridge, didn't they? Near Silers Bald?

RM: Well, them little beeches were up there so high they weren't big enough to pay 'em to get 'em.

SB: So they went up as high as they could get, but they stopped when they got to that stunted timber.

RM: Might have been some of those little old beeches up there curlywood now. Some man knows what a curlywood tree was . . .

SB: What's a curlywood tree?

RM: It's curlywood. I don't know 'em, but I've helped load one of them.

FM: Well, was it beech, or what?

RM: All kinds of trees go curly in these mountains. A feller from Johnson City come here, helped 'em with a carload of curlywood. And they're gone, going to Indianapolis to factories. He'd go in these mountains and cut those curly trees and bring 'em down there and hire some feller with a team to drag 'em on down and take 'em, three or four carloads. They knowed what a curly tree was. I wouldn't know looking at it, but he did. He had two boys.

SB: What did they do with that wood?

RM: What wood?

SB: The curly wood.

RM: Shipped it to Indianapolis.



SB: What did they make out of it?

RM: Oh, furniture, put it over furniture. Bought a buckeye board, and they'll . . . Like a cigarette paper, curly wood on the outside of it, before they got rich.

SB: Back to the cows. You were telling me before what the cows were eating. What did the cows eat during the summer and early spring? What did they eat in the early spring when you put them out early down in the hollows?

RM: Well, lamb's tongue, crow's foot, rich wheat. Come up early kind of like a wild onion, and it died down when hot weather come.

SB: I don't think I know those. What kind of flower did they have on them?

RM: Oh yeah. Shut that thing down, and I'll tell you about flowers.

SB: You don't want to tell me about flowers with the recorder on?

RM: I betcha there ain't a government person workin' for 'em that ever seen 'em. Shut it down.

(pause)

SB: Okay. Do cattle eat wild asters?

RM: You never did hear me talkin' about wild asters. They'd eat ivy in the spring of the year and get poisoned and die in the spring of the year. Take the young 'uns out there, and come the snow or bad weather, and they'd eat the ivy.

SB: Poison ivy?

RM: Just that old mountain ivy.

SB: You were telling me they'd eat jewel weed, touch-me-not?

RM: Wild touch-me-not. Oh, yeah. They'd eat 'em, but they wouldn't eat 'em, not till up to last of July or August.

SB: Somebody told me hogs like touch-me-not, too.

RM: I never did see a hog that eat anything that you'd feed him.

SB: So they'd eat touch-me-not. Up on the balds, the sheep stayed up on Thunderhead?

RM: Oh sheep up on Thunderhead. That's where they'd stay, up there on them balds. The sheep didn't hit the hollers. He'd stay up where there's grass.

SB: So the sheep stayed mostly up where there was grass, and the cows came down into the hollows. And the horses stayed up with the sheep?

RM: Oh, the horses stayed on them balds too. Of course the sheep never let off them balds but to go down them hollers to get water.

SB: So what about at a place like Sheep Pen Gap. Were there any sheep pens there?

RM: Before my time. I don't know how come they call it that. I'd like to know why they call this gap Crib Gap going to Cades Cove.

SB: What's that supposed to be called?

RM: I don't know how come they'd got the name. They say it's on that map. See if it's on that map. Shut this thing out and tell her.

(pause)

SB: Tell me about the Drawer Gap.

RM: Well, I don't think it's on the map.

SB: I don't think it is. I don't think I've ever seen that one before. Where's Drawer Gap?

RM: It's up here on the Middle Prong.

SB: Oh yeah?

RM: It's changed the name.

SB: How did it get its name "Drawer Gap?"

RM: Can you not find Chestnut Flats, Eden Garden?

SB: No, this map's not of a scale to show it.

RM: Well, I'll tell you about it. Along that prong that timber is all growed up in briars and everything. Cattle was through there. I went over Devils Nest and started a bunch of cattle and was drivin' 'em through the long holler. Had on them old BVD underwear. You know they had rubber back there and got hanging loose. Them cattle found a way there before I

knew there was a cut through there. I was a young man. They'd drop down. I couldn't walk. I just pulled 'em off and hung 'em in a bush. I told the fellers how to go through there after they'd growed up. They seen my drawers hanging there and called it Drawer Gap. Harry said it's on the map. He seen it on the map.

SB: It may be on one of these others. I'd have to look on the quad sheet and see if I can find it.

RM: But they've changed so many of these gaps. Don't know nothin' about 'em, and they changed 'em. There's an old deer stand out here.

SB: Yes, Mollies Butt is on that map. How did Mollies get its name?

RM: I'd like to know how. I've been on Mollies Butt a hundred times.

SB: What about Holy Butt. That's another one I've seen on the map. How did that get its name? It's over somewhere Elkmont. There's a ridge over there called Holy Butt.

RM: I'd like to see one of them maps of the Smoky Mountains. I'd like to see the names of them ridges out from Thunderhead towards the Derrick.

SB: Thunderhead towards Derrick?

RM: Yeah, them ridges run all to North Carolina.

SB: Okay. Thunderhead to Derrick. There it is. There's Thunderhead. The first ridge over there is called Devils Courthouse. Not too many marked. There's Devils Ridge, Davis Ridge, Chimney Rocks. It's got some of the creeks marked on it- Deerhobble, Shut-in Creek, Starkey Creek, Devils Branch, Churnhole, Long Branch.

RM: Those towards North Carolina. One of them ridges from Thunderhead down towards the Derrick.

SB: On the North Carolina side there's Meadow Gap, Saddle Back, Chestnut Ridge, Blockhouse Mountain, De Armond Ridge. Do you want to see the map, Boney?

RM: The ridges. Shut this thing off, and I'll tell you about the ridges.

(pause)

RM: When they settled up in North Carolina, now I've been told this; I don't know if it was so. And they wanted to make a road

over it. Now they all met, what few of them there was. Some of them wanted to come down that Defeat Ridge, and some of them wanted to come down the Bote Mountain, but the Bote Mountain carried. The name of it was originally Vote Mountain; I guess that's right. The other mountain over there is the Defeat. They just changed the name of this one to Bote. I guess Vote Mountain is the right name for it. That was all, oh how many years. That's what the old people told me.

SB: Did any of the cattle, or sheep on the ridge ever get attacked by bears or panthers?

RM: Oh yeah.

SB: Did you have a lot of trouble with bears?

RM: Oh, not much. Bears killed 'em.

SB: How often did that happen? What could you do to keep the bears away from them?

RM: There wasn't many bears there. It took an awful big 'un to kill a calf. People hunted them and got fat and killed and ate them. I never did like them. My daddy brought some up there on this Timber Ridge. Jim Burns, oh, up in the summer-time, he had eight or ten. He come down here and wanted to sell 'em to Dad, and Dad bought 'em. They were just three and four hundred pound steers. Bears killed one of 'em and it caught another one. Bear claws on his back. Guess he tried to catch him first, but he got away from him, and he grabbed another.

SB: Were there ever any panthers up there then, or were they all shot out by that time?

RM: I've heard old people tell me this here, but I never did see one.

SB: Never saw tracks or never heard one?

RM: I've heard things hollerin' in the mountains, but I never knew what it was. I know a dog wouldn't run it. Come around the cabin--I had some Plott dogs, they wouldn't run it. Had an old spotted dog I bought in North Carolina; he'd run it. The others wouldn't run it. I don't know if it was a wildcat or panther or what.

SB: They never bothered the sheep or the cattle up on Spence, at least in your memory?

RM: The wolves used to bother them on Spence Place before I can remember.



SB: So did you ever hear old Sparks talking about that?

RM: Yeah.

SB: What did he say about the wolves and bears up there?

RM: Oh, he said them wolves up there got to killin' the sheep. They all come up there and kill one. Get an old mother and said she had young 'uns. Three or four, I won't say which. They hunted for 'em and couldn't find 'em. Said there were two young that died. That's the only one he'd ever knowed of 'em killin' 'em.

SB: When was that?

RM: Oh, I don't have no idea.

SB: That would have been in the 1880's, 1890's, maybe?

RM: Maybe 1890's.

SB: And maybe that was the last wolf up there.

RM: That was the last one I'd ever heard of bein' up there.

SB: Was that the last one ever, probably, in the Park?

RM: How's that?

SB: Were there any other sightings or killings that you heard about since then?

RM: No. These wildcats, a lot of people would call them a wolf. Some of those wild cats could be pretty mean.

SB: Bobcats, you mean?

RM: I never heard them called a bobcat. I've always heard them called a wildcat. Them bobcats were a short tailed cat.

SB: Right. So what's a wildcat?

RM: Well, I don't know what the end of them was like. Like a copperhead snake. I've talked to many a man in the country was been in the Civil War. Some of them say a colperhead snake has his tail in a keen point, the others say it was a blunt tail, so I've never seen a copperhead to know of.

SB: Were there any disease problems with the cattle up on the balds?

RM: Oh no, I never heard of that foot and mouth disease till they seen it in the paper where they just killed 'em years ago and put 'em in a ditch. My daddy had a steer one time I guess had mouth disease.



SB: Did they ever get the trembles? Did they ever just lie down and not be able to stand?

RM: Used to be that in the Smoky Mountains. Called it milk sick. Nobody knew what it was.

SB: Oh, it's probably caused by eating white snakeroot, the plant up there with the white flowers on it. Blooms in the summer.

RM: That's what caused it? Did you ever see anybody that drank the milk from a cow runnin' out and had that disease? I know a man who'd look like he had St. Vitus's dance like that, and when he was a boy, the cows run out in North Carolina.

SB: They got milk sickness, and he got it?

RM: Now, what you said it was?

SB: White Snakeroot. They eat the white snakeroot.

RM: Looks like they'd all have it then.

SB: Yes. That's what I don't understand. I've heard people tell me that the reason that they grazed the cows up high was because they'd eat too much white snakeroot down low, but there's as much white snakeroot up on that mountain as there is down in the valley.

RM: Now, I've been here on Smoky Mountain, and I've seen three steers with milk sickness. Every one of them that found their way down the North Carolina side, I forget what cove it was. You drive 'em down and they go to get hot, and the last one I've seen was a feller name of Pete Sarraat of Sevier County. Got about a mile down from the top of the gant lot, and they got to walking stiff legged, and I told him he'd better stop that steer. Oh, he said he had to take 'em home. He didn't go farther than that little store, and just walked out there and laid down there and died. They got hot. It didn't seem to bother them till it got hot. That's the last one I ever seen with the milk sickness. But the cattle are just like humans. They die once in a while, and nobody knows what's wrong with 'em.

SB: How many do you think they lost every year?

RM: Oh, I wouldn't have no idea. Some of them got lost. Somebody stole 'em, I guess, on the North Carolina side. My daddy told me on at the Derrick, he took his cattle up there before he ever got to takin' out of there, I guess before I was born. In the May that he took salt up there, took so many pounds of salt for every steer, and this was back when

old John Gregory was herding up there, before old Dave. And he asked him, "Where's my cattle at?" and he told them some was out, and old John called, said there was a white steer and a Jersey heifer come up. Old Shields says, "That Jersey heifer belongs to us . . .

(end of side of tape)

SB: How much were you getting for your steers driven over the mountains?

RM: Oh, three cents was a good price a pound. World War I bought for ten cents. I think they brought about ten and a half cents the next year and that was when I quit foolin' with 'em. Forty, fifty cents her last year, I heard. If I'd have had that, I'd have been a millionaire three or four times when I drove over them mountains.

SB: What kind of cattle did you keep? Herefords? Whatever you had?

RM: Well, we finally got to keeping Durham cattle. There was an old stock of cattle here called the Red Devil when I was a boy. Then they got the Durham and then the whiteface come next and then the Angus cattle.

SB: What was this Red Devil like? What did that cow look like?

RM: He was a heavy-bodied steer, short horns. I don't know whatever come of it. I think that's where they got the Angus. I know they breed that one. I've seen two or three of 'em that was as red as blood.

SB: There weren't any fences up on those balds, were there?

RM: Oh no. They just went where they'd please. And now the government's dug all of them trails all through the mountains, and a man couldn't take a bunch of cattle up there and never been a man. . . . The government doesn't have enough men in the army to keep a hundred head up there.

SB: What do they do? They head right back on down the trails?

RM: Just hit that trail.

SB: Did anyone ever cut up there? Like cut at Spence Field or out at Russell?

RM: Cut hay?

SB: No. Cut wood. Do you remember when Russell was cleared?

RM: Oh no. Nobody else don't. It always was a bald. I guess they don't know. Been down here across the river, Tellico Plains. There's a Stratton Bald. Oh, I've heard them talk about them balds as the same as here.

SB: Do you remember anyone doing any cutting on the bald edges to keep them open, like cutting any blackberries or cutting any small trees, killing any saplings?

RM: They'd cut 'em for wood.

SB: What size trees did they cut for wood?

RM: Oh, not too big. Cut 'em in the summer time as big as your thigh, drag it down, chop 'em up. They wouldn't cut 'em too big.

SB: Did they leave the larger trees standing, then, and cut the smaller ones in between?

RM: Just cut them down. There wasn't too many big ones up there on top.

SB: Did they cut away from the edges?

RM: Wherever they had a cabin, that's where (unintelligible).

SB: Where did they cut logs for the cow pens?

RM: Oh, just cut 'em around there and carry 'em.

SB: Just any old place around the bald?

RM: Yeah. Split rails. Cut a tree down, split it, and make rails.

SB: So Russell was always clear as long as you can remember?

RM: Oh yes. Russell and Thunderhead out at the Derrick.

SB: Derrick is just about closed up now.

RM: Growed up. How long has it been since you was up there?

SB: I was up there two months ago.

RM: The bald's all filled up with bushes, is it?

SB: There's trees all over Derrick. There's hardly a bald there at all now.

RM: How big a bushes are they?

SB: Small pole yellow birch about four inches across all over the place.

RM: I don't know. Maybe the Indians might have cut them balds in time. I don't know. They might have raised corn there.

SB: Do you think the soil's that good?

RM: Why yeah. Take this bottom right over here. Right out there where them houses is. I've picked up many a glass bead that the Indians made. Had one of these old drag harrows, made 'em ourselves. Drag them old disc harrows, they kind of kept the ground level. You could pick up Indian beads, arrows. Called it flint rock on the area where'd they'd shot the deer. But they got cuttin' harrows and big plows and turned 'em in so you hardly ever find 'em.

SB: Did you ever find any arrowheads or any Indian pottery up on the balds?

RM: No.

SB: Never any arrowheads up there?

RM: I never did hear of it. Them Indians stayed where there was water. They might have been up there in time. How many different tribes of Indians are there in the United States?

SB: I don't know.

RM: I've heard there was twenty-eight different tribes.

SB: There might have been more than that. On the balds, then, the cows just grazed on that grass real low. Did they ever eat any shrubs or young trees?

RM: Yeah, they'd eat leaves.

SB: Which ones did they like to eat?

RM: Oh, I don't know. I've seen them eat leaves and little bushes. I never did pay no attention to what kind they was gettin' it off of.

SB: Did they eat serviceberries at all?

RM: I don't know.

SB: Did they eat azaleas? Will cows eat mountain laurel and azaleas?



RM: No. They won't eat it. One that's never been out there and bit that ivy goin' up in the spring, he'd get a bunch of it and get sick. He'd starve to death before he'd eat it. The young ones that never been in the mountains get hungry, they'd eat it. That's ones that get poisoned.

SB: What about blueberry bushes? Do cows eat blueberry bushes at all?

RM: Oh, I don't know whether they would or not. Guess they would.

SB: Then they ate lots of little shrubs and trees.

RM: Oh, yes, and the mountains, the weeds grow up in the summertime. They'd eat them and the touch-me-nots.

SB: Do you remember the different weeds that they were eating in the summer?

RM: No. I don't pay no attention to 'em. All kinds of 'em. All those flowers I was tellin' you about a while ago. I'd like to see somebody that would have told me the name of them. They was thick. There was a weed that come up like a poke. But they never did come back no more.

SB: All around up here was sort of more open in those days than it is now. There were blackberries in your pastures?

RM: On the mountain? Oh yes. Goin' up to Bote Mountain here, I went with a ranger, oh, fifteen years ago, and I couldn't see where the Defeat, Eve's Garden Branch, Chestnut Flats Branch, Devil's Nest Branch was. We went up the laurel in a jeep. Grewed up, them pines. I told him when I was back 25 years old, I'd come out there some night with an axe, I'd cut 'em down. They kept 'em cut down. Goin' up and down the Bote Mountain, you could see the Defeat, see every holler over there, and now you can't see 'em. I ain't been there fifteen years up that Bote Mountain.

SB: You can't see anything now. In the winter you can see just a little bit between the trees. But you can't see all until you get up to Spence Field, and even then you can't see the Tennessee side well until you actually get right on top of Thunderhead. North Carolina side you can still see good from Spence Field.

RM: Where do you have to get on Old Smoky to see the lake?

SB: Oh, the lake. Fontana?

RM: Yeah, Fontana. Out to Thunderhead?



SB: You can see it from Thunderhead; you can see it a little bit from Spence; you can see it a little bit from Silers. Can't see it from Derrick.

RM: Well, when did whats-his-name fly the ocean?

SB: Lindbergh?

RM: Lindenberg.

SB: What was it? 1929?

RM: I don't know, somewhere in the twenties. But where was that wife? He went to meet that wife and married her down there. He was a-courtin' her.

SB: New Jersey? Didn't she come from New Jersey?

RM: No. She lived somewhere (unintelligible). Her daddy was a general or something in the army down here. Some of these islands somewhere. Now this brother of mine, died here last, almost a year ago. He was on Smoky Mountain with Fonze Cable and he said that airplane came over there, wasn't a hundred feet high. Said he come around Thunderhead right out the Spence Place. The sun was down. It wasn't dark, but it was gettin' dark. He said him and Fonze run out there, just him and Fonze was there and looked at that airplane. He was up there day or two and come in, and was tellin' about Lindenberg flyin', goin' to see his wife. He wasn't married to her. All they also said of Lindenberg that (unintelligible).

SB: Probably was. He was probably flying over the mountains.

RM: Did you ever see his plane?

SB: Pardon?

RM: Did you ever see Lindenberg's plane that he flew the ocean in?

SB: It's in the Smithsonian in Washington. I think I've seen it. Spirit of St. Louis?

RM: Looks like a wheelbarrow, don't it.

SB: Yeah, it does, I guess. I don't think I'd want to fly across the Atlantic in that plane.

RM: Oh, it looks better than a wheel barrow, all them little wires. Looks like sixty-six holding the wings up.

SB: Boney, was there anything built on the grass balds aside from the herder's cabin and those pens? Is that all that was up there that was a structure?

RM: Oh no. No cabins up on the mountains. They was always down in the hollers where there was water.

SB: So the herders stayed in huts or tents or . . .?

RM: Oh, they had a log cabin, Old Tom Sparks had a good log house there. Two rooms to it. Wasn't very big. Had a fireplace where he cooked over the fire. It was about as wide as this and I don't know how much longer. And he. . . . One room was the bedroom. When he took that woman up there, she had to have something to eat for breakfast. Old Tom had to put the oven on, make her corn bread and some coffee. Fried her some meat. Old Tom said she went to sleep. He woked her up, a-settin' on that chair holdin' that baby while he got his supper. He waked her up, said she ate, said, "There's the bed. You take the baby and go to bed," says, "I'll go over and sleep here before the fire." Oh, I bet that, I'll bet . .

SB: So there was just a nice cabin. Was it down by the spring on the Carolina side?

RM: On the Carolina side, yeah. You know where that spring is?

SB: Well, there are two of them. The big one is when you come up Bote Mountain now and if you go off to the, sort of towards the right and go back over the bald, that's where the big spring is. There's where the shelter is, down there.

RM: They've got a new one out further towards Thunderhead, haven't they?

SB: Yeah, they've got two, one more towards Thunderhead and then one by the big spring. I think they may have, I'm not sure if they tore one of them down or not. They may have, but they had two cabins. Were they the only buildings up there? Did he have any outbuildings up there? Did he have any outbuildings or . . .?

RM: No.

SB: He had nothing except that cabin?

RM: That cabin.

SB: No fence or anything around it?

RM: No, not a thing in the world. Only fence there was as around, oh Tom he cleared up a patch about as big as this house right at the back and out of the woods and planted cabbages. The biggest cabbage heads that ever I've seen was up there.

I can remember I come out from North Carolina one time and met him out comin' around from Bone Valley towards

Thunderhead, and he was coming from Thunderhead oh, about twelve o'clock. He went down there and (unintelligible) over in the course of (unintelligible) cabin. He made corn bread and put it in the oven and went out there and got a cabbage head and drenched it and just quartered it and put it in a big iron kettle and got about two pounds of butter and put it on. I thought it was the best meal I ever eat. That corn bread and more cabbage . . .

SB: He didn't have any milk cows up there, did he?

RM: No. Rarely, rarely. Lord, he wouldn't fool with milk. . . . I wouldn't fool with a milk cow up there either.

SB: Not even. . . . So he didn't have any milk up there at all. Just corn bread and cabbage. And what else did he eat?

RM: Whatever he could carry up, beans or one thing or another.

SB: Did he ever hunt up on the top there?

RM: Oh, Tom (unintelligible) bear huntin'. Old Tom would be up there. (unintelligible) and chestnuts. He killed them bears.

SB: You used to go bear hunting, did you?

RM: Oh yeah. I'd go up there and see two kettles on the fireplace all the time for bear meat.

SB: You used to cook bear meat, did you? You were telling me about Walker who. . . . Was Walker the one that was drinking the bear grease?

RM: Oh yeah. Bob Walker. He lived down here at Walland. Old Bob's been dead ten or fifteen years. Yeah. Old Bob was there and the kettles didn't have no lid on 'em, just hung right on the fire and cooked all day and night. Ash would blow up on them, dust. . . . Old Bob Walker come in, grabbed a pint cup and just skimmed them up. Put a pint cup in there and drank a pint of bear grease.

SB: He didn't put it on his shoes, he drank it?

RM: Didn't do what?

SB: He didn't put it on his shoes, he drank it?

RM: Drank it. Turn off that recorder and I'll tell you what it done for him, too.

SB: What did it do for him?

RM: I don't know what it done. In about a week every time you'd see him, his pants looked like he'd set in water. Went through him, I reckon.

Bob was the best hunter was ever in these mountains. He was a young feller, Bob was about seven or eight years older than me. Bob called one of them old gobblers up in the spring of the year where they hunted for him, and he shot at him, and Bob, he killed it. Called him up, he could just gobble just like a turkey. He found one of them hens too, he killed 'em. Them old turkeys in the spring of the year when they go to gobblin', go to baitin', hear one gobble. Old Bob, he'd get in earshot before he could see he was comin', he'd gobble just like it only hardly as loud. He'd gobble again, and old Bob would gobble again a little louder, and he'd be right up on old Bob, old Bob would kill it. Only man I ever heard who could gobble like a turkey. You couldn't tell him from a turkey.

SB: He was a bear hunter too, though?

RM: Oh, bear hunter. Bob hunted for bears. One out here on the middle prong of the river, crossed over to the Defeat side, crossed the river comin' over on to Bote Mountain to get chestnuts. Crossed a big log across the river. Everybody'd come very evening, wait, couldn't get it. Old Bob told me he wet his thumb, see which way the air was moving, said the air was goin' from him, here he come. Killed him. Them bears used to be very wild. They'd wind you quarter of a mile. You couldn't get to 'em. Now they're thicker than the . . . Catch a dog, would kill one back then.

SB: Do you think there are a lot more bears now than there were then?

RM: Oh Lord yeah.

SB: What about the turkeys. There are not many turkeys now. Did they sort of disappear after the chestnut die-out?

RM: Oh, the turkeys was hunted out, killed out.

SB: They were hunted out.

RM: Turkey . . . Killed a turkey in the spring of the year, you had to go get yourself a mess of ramps to eat before you could eat. You know, what these ramps are, don't you? Grows in the mountain. You ought to go get yourself a mess of ramps and then go get you a dozen eggs, bring 'em over here and boil them eggs.

SB: Oh I like ramps cooked with eggs. That's really good.



RM: Well, what I'm going to tell you: boil them eggs and not eat any ramp. Cut one of them eggs open, then you'll eat your ramp. You'll have to eat the ramp so you can eat the egg. (unintelligible) turkey, on the mountain, kill a wild turkey, cook it, if you eat ramps first before you eat it, it just tastes like ramps.

SB: Were there any moonshiners back in there in those days.

RM: Oh yeah. They made whiskey ever since. . . . Carr's Creek over here was the worst place for whiskey. They made it over there, and I guess they're makin' it yet over there.

SB: They were making it in the Park, too, back in those days. In fact, they probably were after the Park was started even.

RM: Oh, they made it up here in Walker's Valley, up there at the Stillhouse Branch goin' up above Walker's Valley to Tremont. The Stillhouse Branch. That still stayed in service there for ten years. Five years anyway. I don't know how long it was.

SB: How big was that still?

RM: Oh, it was 75 gallons, I guess. Used to make it when they doubled it and singled it. They had it in a 90 and a 30 gallon, before they ever used this thump cask. Put it in a 90 gallon and run it off and then put it in a 30 gallon. That's what they called it, doubled it and singled it. That was the only way to make whiskey.

SB: Did your family ever make whiskey?

RM: No. My old granddaddy did but back years ago, before the Civil War. Wasn't ever a tax (unintelligible). They put a tax on whiskey to pay the Civil War debt.

SB: I'm not sure. There may have been a tax on it in some places before that. I remember there was a whiskey rebellion sometime around the War of 1812. I don't think back in the Civil War times anyone could get back into these valleys to collect a tax if there was one. They would have had a hard time.

RM: (unintelligible) over in Millers Cove, during the Civil War went on the Union side, what few was left.

SB: Most of the people from around here were Union during the Civil War?

RM: Oh yeah, Union yet. All the old settlers. What few didn't go, they had to scoutin' around, and bushwhackers come over here from North Carolina and steal everything they had. Steal their horses and everything they had.



SB: Who were the bushwhackers?

RM: I don't know who they were. They were from North Carolina and come over here. My granddaddy on my mother's side over here in Wears Cove goin' over to Line Springs, you been over that road? They come over here and stole his horses and he was about 16 years old, and they went up there and stole what they could in Wears Cove, and he hid in that gap, killed 'em there, shot 'em, run 'em off, and he caught a mule, a five-year-old mule, and he hid it out in that holler, and old Uncle Dan, his brother, took it up in the holler and fed it there till the war was over. Bring her down and made a crop and (unintelligible) for him and take it up there and have it hid up there in a laurel thicket, hid his mule. They had a fight right up here at Beth El Church.

SB: Really?

RM: Yeah, and they killed one of 'em, one of them bushwhackers, and up there where (unintelligible)'s place is. That's where my granddaddy lived. My grandmother knit him, or someone did, a pair of socks. They were in his pocket and they buried him up at this graveyard, and granddaddy's socks, put 'em on him. Never did know who he was.

SB: Well, I think it's probably time to call it quits.

End of tape.

Transcribed by William Morgan, Christina Dombrowski, and Mary Lindsay.

Carlos Campbell, pre-Park hiker and secretary of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association interviewed by Susan Bratton, Park Biologist, May 22, 1975

SB: Who are you, and when were you born, and where were you born?

CC: I'm Carlos Campbell. I was born in 1892; August of this year I'll be 83 years old. I was born the north end of Sevier County with Mount LeConte in sight of me. I never heard the name "Mount LeConte" till 1921. I was quite a young man by that time and became interested in the Smokies after that, but it was just some distant land in my boyhood days. After the Hiking Club was organized,--and I helped organize it--I spent a tremendous amount of time hiking the trails of the Smokies, made most of the hikes of the Hiking Club and a lot of additional hikes, and we'd have some interesting experiences.

In 1931 eight of us undertook to hike from one end of the Park to the other. That's a zig-zag distance of 72 miles. However, we actually announced plans to hike only from Davenport Gap to the northeast end of the Park, to Newfound Gap. Secretly, we had hoped to go on the rest of the way and did do that, but when we were two nights out, we ran out of food, because we had extended it, and we actually divided crackers. At lunch period we didn't have enough crackers to go around. We knew the Herder's cabin--that was before grazing was stopped in the Park--was only at Russell Field, a short distance ahead, and Harvey Broome and I went two or three hundred yards off the trail to where this cabin was to see if we could get a chicken or some eggs. When we got there, Fonze was sitting in the door, and I said, "Fonze, you got any chickens or eggs?" He says, "Hell, no!" I said, "Well, we're out of food. Have you got any food you can spare?" He said, "Well, maybe." And believe it or not, the only items of food he had was corn meal, potatoes, and bacon without a single streak in it. Well, we bought two or three pounds of the fatback--That isn't what we called it--and about half a gallon of meal and a gallon or so of potatoes. And that's the only time in my life I remember being actually hungry. All of us were actually hungry then. And all of us admitted that that tasted like a banquet because we fried those potatoes and made some corn-cakes and really had a feast and went on and finished the hike.

Interesting thing about the end of that hike, though. Having changed our plans, we wound up at Deals Gap without transportation. We knew that we could get a bus from Maryville into Knoxville, but we stood down by the roadside, and, by the way, nobody had shaved for the whole nine days, and two or three people passed and wouldn't. . . . What we were wanting was to catch someone going down to Tapoco so we could phone to Maryville for transportation. Finally, a couple of fishermen passed us and then backed up. They'd talked it over and decided maybe it would be safe to . . . So they brought us on into Maryville, and we got on the . . .

Well, we went to the drugstore and ate about a quart of ice cream apiece. We got on the bus, all of us at the back end. The rest of the bus was, oh, pretty well scattered, people all around. Pretty soon, though, the rest of the other people were all at the front of the bus. When Guy Frizell and I got to town, we saw a neighbor. We lived close together. We saw a neighbor who lived close to both of us, and he brought us home. Next morning he started to take his daughter to school, and she said, "Dad, what in the world have you had in this car?" We hadn't had a bath in nine days so that accounted for the people moving to the front of the bus and for his daughter.

SB: When was the first time you ever visited a grassy bald? Do you remember?

CC: Yes. It was in 1925. The Hiking Club was organized in the beginning of 1925 as the result of a 1924 October trip to LeConte. In 1925 we would take a hike, and then at the end of that we would plan where we'd go the next time and when it would be, but we did have a hike to Gregory at that time. During that year we realized that what we needed to do was make out a schedule for hikes throughout the year and published a little handbook. But the first time was in 1925.

It was all entirely new to me. I had been on LeConte, saw how rugged it was, but it was my first time to visit one of the grassy balds, and at that time grazing was practiced there. The grass was only a few inches tall, and the fourteen or fifteen acres of Gregory Bald was covered with grass, a few willows on one spot, and then a lot of azaleas.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park was selected for park purposes as the result of a committee that was appointed by Dr. Hubert Work, who was then Secretary of the Interior, appointed a committee of five to investigate the southern Appalachians to see if there was any area suitable for becoming a National Park, and one of the members of that committee of five was Harlan P. Kelsey. He was quite a famous economic botanist, and he was noted for his landscape ideas, and he was fascinated with the flame azaleas that were in great abundance on Gregory Bald.

SB: Where were the azaleas?

CC: They were roughly around the rim, not on the crest and not right up against the forest, but there were hundreds of them in a kind of a crescent around the eastern end and the north and south sides back to at least the middle. That's where most of the azaleas were. There were a few elsewhere.

But Mr. Kelsey made the statement that the flame azalea, which, incidentally, was one of his favorite shrubs, reached its maximum development anywhere in the country on and near Gregory Bald and said that was one of the highlights, one of

the things that made this area worthy of being a National Park.

He and one other man were the only two who climbed LeConte and went to Gregory after they were appointed, and they were so fascinated with what they saw in both places they brought the other three down, and as a result of what they saw, they recommended not just one park but two, Shenandoah and the Smokies. And, strangely enough, they admitted Great Smokies were easily first in height of mountains and depth of valleys and the unmatched variety of trees, plants and shrubs; but then, in spite of that, they recommended the establishment of a park in Shenandoah first in the hope that it would be so popular that one would then later be established in the Smokies. But that wasn't the way it worked out. The people pushing the plan for a National Park in the Smokies kept pushing, and we got ours established before Shenandoah was.

SB: At that time were there any other shrubs around the azaleas more or less off by themselves?

CC: I would say they occupied maybe one or two acres, but they were gorgeous plants in various shades.

SB: Were there any other shrubs near them or was that the only shrub out on the bald?

CC: That was the only tall shrub. There was a little colony of a dwarf type of willow that only grew 18 inches tall, maybe two feet.

SB: What about blueberries, little blueberries? Were there any blueberries?

CC: I don't remember any blueberries on Gregory at any time. I have on some of the other balds, on Parson Bald, but I don't remember seeing any blueberries at the time, back in '25, 6 or 7 on Gregory. I don't remember anything but grass, azaleas, and those few willows.

SB: There were no trees out in the center?

CC: Not a single one, not a single tree, and, incidentally, there was a 350° panoramic view. From there you could see Cades Cove along most of that area, along the top of the ridge.

SB: Okay. As you come straight down the top of the ridge from Gregory, then, you could see Cades Cove along most of that area, along the top of the ridge.

CC: Yes. The best view was out a little bit closer to the east end than the west end.

SB: Over toward Moore Spring, where the ridge came up a little ways?



CC: Yes, yes. And, incidentally, after you got into the forest down to Moore Spring, the forest looked there like a forested city park. There were big trees, not a single bit of young stuff, no undercover whatsoever, just grass and big trees. And every time a tree fell, it just made room for that much more grass.

SB: So there was no seedling or sapling regeneration at all that you can remember?

CC: The grazing cattle and sheep would nip every acorn that sprouted the first year; it never got a tree started. Every little tender shoot that sprung up, they got it, and I suspect and firmly believe that if grazing had been continued maybe for a hundred or two hundred years, the whole ten miles between Gregory Bald and Thunderhead would have been one continuous grassy meadow! But grazing definitely kept all of that stuff out on the grassy part of Gregory.

SB: How far down did this open, park-like forest go?

CC: It went all the way down to what we then called Rich Gap. The grazing cattle developed a kind of a bloated condition, and in the fall when it was time to drive them down, they put them in an enclosure built of fallen trees. They just laid one on top of the other and made an enclosure of, oh, an acre or so; and that was at the point where the trail from Cades Cove reached the crest of the mountain, the Tennessee-North Carolina line. It was built right along the line, just barely east of where the trail crossed on its way around to Moore Spring--Gregory Spring--just near the summit.

But they put the cattle in there to let them work off that bloated condition a few days before they'd drive them down. I don't understand the mechanics of all that, but there seemed to be the necessity because they said the cattle couldn't stand driving down with all that living on all that lush grass diet continuously, and that was known as the "gant lot," a corruption of "gaunt," "gaunt" the cattle before driving them down. But there was some open area on east of that toward Thunderhead but not as much as there was between that gap we referred to as Rich Gap.

But after that first hike to Gregory Bald, Gregory was on the schedule for every year that the Club existed, AND ON TWO OR three occasions we had overnight hikes. Well on two or three occasions we had moonlight hikes. We'd started out after dark, depending on what time the moon came up, and camp there close to Moore Spring or up on the crest just in the forest, just before we got on the grassy. One time we had a moonlight hike there and I had some prune juice in my pack, and I kept teasing the rest about how they'd want to feel envious when they saw me drinking my prune juice the next morning. Well, come time to get up and go up to see the sunrise,



and the . . . I was still kidding about the prune juice I was going to enjoy when we got back down, and when I got back down, there was an empty prune juice can on top of my pack. I had said a little too much. They got the juice and I didn't. But, anyway, we had a lot of play like that going on all the time, but later we had another moonlight hike up there, and we'd all get up and go see the sunrise from there.

Incidentally, here I have a picture that a grandson made on his honeymoon hike. He spent the first two nights at a resort out the edge of the mountains, and then he took a hike to Thunderhead and down the state line from Gregory and camped down there, and this is the sunrise that they saw. I've made a lot of sunrise pictures, but I don't think I ever got one I like as much as this one made by my grandson on his. . . . Incidentally, at that point they got a picture of one of your wild hogs. They were looking at him running right out of the edge of the bush.

SB: Okay. You were up on the balds while they were still grazing them. Do you remember what kind of livestock they had or how large the herds were?

CC: I don't remember in numbers. I suspect that there were a hundred or more cattle, maybe a good deal more cattle. I think that not always did they have sheep, and I have seen pretty good size herds of sheep up there, and, incidentally, I've seen a few horses grazing with the others, not often, not many, but mostly cattle and occasionally some sheep. But they kept that looking like a well kept lawn. They didn't graze it down like an old grazed pasture field. The grass was always four or five inches tall. There was plenty of feed there for. . . . They didn't overgraze it.

SB: Was there any soil erosion, either because the cattle were cutting trails or the sheep were cutting trails, or messes around the springs?

CC: I have never seen any indication whatsoever of erosion until recently the rooting of the hogs rooting for grubs or whatnot turned up considerable patches of turf. That probably caused a little erosion. I don't know how much.

SB: What about trails on the bald, like the Appalachian Trail now at Spence? There's some places where there's some erosion.

CC: The Appalachian Trail doesn't cross Gregory now; it did in those days. It went on down to Deals Gap and on down to Tapoco and back up Yellow Creek Mountain and on over. Several years ago they changed the routing, and took the part between Thunderhead and Gregory down to Fontana Dam, so Gregory is no longer on the Appalachian Trail. But there's a lot of hiking. It's a very popular destination. The Park Service used to

conduct a lot of nature guided hikes, and they'd always have one at the time the azaleas were in bloom and frequently at other times of the year. And then the Hiking Club had at least one hike every year to Gregory, and I guess, though, that by far the most of the people who went up there were in private groups. For instance, I like Gregory. I've gone many a time to take friends, not as part of an organized hike. I suspect more people go to Gregory in little individual groups than there are in the big organized groups. But it has always been, ever since I first knew the place, one of the most popular destinations, not as much so as LeConte but perhaps a close second. I never say any figures on that, but it's always been an extremely popular destination for hikes and, incidentally, for horseback trips. A lot of people ride horseback up there.

SB: Do you remember any fires on the balds?

CC: I don't remember any fires in any part of the Park after the Park was established. Before the Park was established, there were fires down on the slopes. One in 1925 was so bad that Colonel Chapman, the leader of the Park movement, flew over the area, and he said it appeared that the whole mountain was on fire. Well, it did burn over a lot of land where timber had been cut and brush let, and that was mostly what was being burned. But I have never seen the slightest indication of fire on Gregory Bald or Thunderhead or Spence Field or Silers Bald or Andrews Bald, any of those. Never heard of any fires in recent years, never talked to anybody who had seen fire or evidence of it. It's possible that way back there might have been some fire in there, but I have no personal knowledge of any. I do know that ever since the time I started up there, there hasn't been any.

SB: Now, you were there at the time when there were still herders up there. Where were there herders' cabins in 1925? Which balds had cabins, and where were they?

CC: Well, the main cabins I remember in operation was this one that Fonze Cable was using at Russell Field. And then at Spence Field there was one on there, but a neighbor who had been going to the mountains long, long years before the Park movement started, he said that he had seen at Spence Field four previous herders' cabins. So they evidently didn't last very many years.

SB: Where were those cabins?

CC: They were fairly close to the spring.

SB: The big spring down on the Carolina side, over top of the ridge?

CC: Yes, on the Carolina side. And I don't remember any herder's cabin at or near Gregory. I've seen the grazing many, many times, but . . .

SB: Where did the herders up on Gregory stay if there was no . . .?

CC: I don't know.

SB: Did they stay in (unintelligible) cabins farther down?

CC: Maybe. Or I suspect maybe they just slept out in the open.

SB: I've heard . . . The postmaster in Townsend mentioned a herder's tent somewhere, that one of the herders was using a tent.

CC: Well he might have used it. Oh, I do remember now that the spring between the ridge where the trail is and the . . . As you come off of Gregory down a mile or so. I'm sorry I forgot about that. There was one down there, probably a mile below the state line, maybe not over a half mile. But it was off to the left of the trail as you came down, or to the right as you go up. You could see it from the trail.

SB: This was the trail that comes up from Big Poplar and up that way?

CC: Yes.

SB: There was a cabin about a mile down somewhere on the way up that trail that comes up to Moore Spring. What about down at Sheep Pen Gap end? As you go on out towards Parsons? Were there any cabins or structures out there at all?

CC: Possibly there might have been before my day, but I never saw one in Sheep Pen Gap or at Parsons.

SB: Were there any other structures you remember like fences, outbuildings, anything like that?

CC: Only this improvised fence that each autumn they'd keep the cattle confined there for a few days before they started the trip down the mountain. That's the nearest thing to a fence that I ever saw. It served a purpose, but it was an odd looking fence. There were some pictures; I had a picture. I never made a picture of it because I hadn't started making pictures in those days, but I wouldn't know where to get a picture of that.

SB: That was just small pole, or was that split rail?

CC: No, it wasn't cut up or split. It was trees. A lot of them were eight, eighteen inches in diameter.

SB: Eighteen inches--that's a fairly good sized log.

CC: They'd stake those into position and put these small ones on top of them.

SB: So they'd put great big ones down at the bottom, and they'd cross with smaller poles.

CC: They didn't. . . . They just more or less threw them one on top of the other, helter-skelter.

SB: How long were these logs? Were they like 16 feet long, 20 feet long?

CC: Sometimes a whole tree length from the base up to. . . . The side limbs were trimmed off. I suspect most of the logs in that improvised fence were ten to thirty feet long.

SB: How big was that area? It was an acre or two?

CC: About an acre, I would guess.

SB: What kind of gate was there? Was there any kind of gate?

CC: They'd just pull a log out of position and drive the cattle in and pull it back in position.

SB: Did they water the cattle when they were there?

CC: I don't know. I suspect that they watered them, but it would have been difficult. That was several hundred yards from Moore Spring. It never occurred to me what they did about water. I don't know if they carried water to them or what.

SB: Just left them. Did the cattle and sheep just water at Moore Spring and the spring at Sheep Pen Gap, just at those springs that were just off the high ridge?

CC: Yes.

SB: They just went down to water when they wanted it.

CC: Oh, yes.

SB: Was there much erosion around the springs due to animals watering there?

CC: Not enough to. . . . It was negligible.



SB: Did you worry about drinking the water in those days, coming out of those springs?

CC: Moore Spring is one of the finest springs that I ever saw. The water came out from under a rock and bubbled up good and strong even in dry periods. I have been up there when there had been no rain for weeks, and still it was flowing good and strong. Because it's probably a few hundred feet lower than the elevation of Gregory and all that grassy area absorbed the water, and it fed that spring. . . . I never saw it when it was anything less than a good flow of water, and I've had several friends agree that that was the best mountain spring they ever saw. Lots of the springs like the one on LeConte, for instance, the water, in a wet season the water would come out way up here, and in a dry season it would come out down maybe a hundred yards, two hundred yards lower, depending on the ground water table.

SB: When was the first time you remember anyone picking blueberries or serviceberries on Gregory or Spence?

CC: I don't seem to associate blueberries or huckleberries or any of those with Gregory.

SB: The blueberries there are excellent now.

CC: Yes, but I suspect, but I couldn't prove it . . . I suspect that they came in after the grazing stopped; I don't know.

SB: Do you know when they might have come in, like '40's, '50's, '60's?

CC: No. As a matter of fact, I don't remember seeing any myself even after the grazing had been stopped. Soon after grazing was stopped, the grass, which had been, oh, three, four inches tall usually, almost immediately it was knee high, just not long after the grazing was stopped.

SB: Do you ever remember people digging up azaleas from Gregory or planting azaleas from Gregory or the settlers maybe fiddling with them?

CC: Never heard of any vandalism of that sort whatsoever.

SB: What did the settlers, you know, the local people, think of the azaleas? Did you ever hear any of them talk about the azaleas on Gregory or mention them at all?

CC: I think they just took them for granted. I don't know if they were . . . They just grew up with it, you know. They were there. They didn't seem to . . .

SB: Do you ever remember. . . . Were there any bears around the balds when you were up there?



CC: We didn't see any bears in the Park until years and years after we'd been hiking. I remember once coming off of Spence Field shortly after we left the Bote Mountain Road, the trail swings around to the left, as you know, and we had a glimpse of a bear running off the trail down to the right through there. And then another time, I don't remember where this was, we came around a curve or bend, and we saw young sassafras trees spring up, somebody had them down, and we could see bear tracks around there. They had them pulled down. They had been eating the fruits off the sassafras.

SB: When was this?

CC: Oh, that was probably along the mid-thirties, but we didn't begin to see bears until a long time after the Park was established. We would see tracks. I've seen tracks of them in the snow sometimes, which indicates they don't sleep soundly all winter. Some people said maybe they walk in their sleep, but I doubt that. But anyway, I've seen bear tracks in the snow in the wintertime. When you got within sight or hearing distance or smell, they'd take off. They were afraid of people. They had been hunted.

The hunting had prevailed in there, and the hunters used dogs, and they had killed them down to the point where there was relatively few bear, relatively few deer left when the Park was established, and it took years for the bears to accept man as not being an enemy. First it became evident along the road to Newfound Gap, and there it was the fact that they were being fed, tossing food out, which was a violation of Park regulations, but it was practiced pretty widely. And one woman was feeding a bear, and she ran out of food, and the bear didn't understand, and she started back to her car, and the bear followed and almost tore her dress off of her.

SB: So you remember any. . . . So the herders, then, had very few problems with bears or . . .

CC: I never heard of any problem, and I doubt if they did have because, as I say, the bears had been hunted so ruthlessly and so extensively that they were afraid of man.

SB: Did you ever hear any stories about panthers or wolves up around the balds or in those areas taking sheep?

CC: Oh, I've heard people talk about hearing them, but I always suspected that what they were hearing was a great horned owl, maybe not a great horned owl. One of the owls makes a noise like a woman screaming or a panther. I doubt very much if during my lifetime there were any panthers or any of the cats left in the Smokies. Bobcats, yes, I've seen a few, very few, but not any of the big cats.

SB: They used to turn their hogs loose in those days. Do you remember any damage by the hogs on the lower streams or around the balds?

CC: No, I don't know of any. They'd mark their ears so they'd separate their hogs from their neighbor's hogs. They could identify their own stock in the fall when they brought them in, same as cattle. They were intermixed while they were grazing on top. I never saw. . . . I don't know when I ever saw any hogs on Gregory. I'm not sure that I ever did, but very few would get up that high, I'm sure.

SB: They stayed down in the lower coves mostly.

CC: Yes.

SB: What about Andrews? When was the first time you ever visited Andrews?

CC: It was a few years after 1925. I didn't get down there until three or four years, maybe, after we started hiking. There wasn't any road out to Clingman's Dome then, and it was a pretty good hike. As a matter of fact, there wasn't any road to Newfound Gap in those days.

First time I ever saw Newfound Gap, it was a forested meadow and had spring beauties growing up so densely--And by the way, at a distance a spring beauty looks white; you don't see that little pink vein in it--but it almost looked like a patch of snow on the ground in Newfound Gap before they built the road there.

But to get to Clingman's Dome in those days you'd start hiking pretty close to where the Park Headquarters is now and hike up. I made only one hike up and back the same day, and that was tremendously hard, but usually we'd spend one night on top. I remember three different towers on Clingman's. One was built by the Forest Service before the Park. It became unsafe for use, and the Park Service built one with zig-zag steps. That first one, it went up the corners in improvised steps, and most people were afraid to go up. And you just went through a hole in the floor of the thing and pulled yourself around. It was really dangerous. Most people didn't go up. But then when the Park Service built its first and only wooden tower, there they had zig-zag steps leading up to a platform about the size of a living room. Then as that began to get shaky, they replaced it with the present tower.

SB: So when . . .

CC: The mountains are very different since grazing stopped. The forest encroachment on Gregory had made many of us fear that the azaleas and those fine views would be crowded out. I believe you indicated you'd never seen Cades Cove from up there.

SB: Can't see Cades Cove from Gregory.

CC: In the early days we got some beautiful views of Cades Cove from near the east end of Gregory. Used to be a little pile of rocks and a pole on the very highest point with a marker. That was closer to the east end than it was to the west end of the bald. There we got good views of the Cove, and I would like to see that view restored.

SB: But you could stand on the ground and see the Cove, could you?

CC: Oh, yes. That was the only thing you could stand on. There was nothing else up there.

SB: You didn't have to climb a tree or anything?

CC: No trees to climb.

SB: Well, let's get back to Andrews. What did it look like the first time that you saw it? What were the edges like? Were they like the edges of Gregory? Now, that's got spruce forest up behind it.

CC: Spruce forest instead of the oak and beech. And also Andrews has some, I mean in addition to azaleas, has some very fine purple rhododendrons, and scattered spots have some very fine orchids.

SB: The rhododendron and the mountain laurel and the azaleas were there at the time you visited that bald?

CC: Yes, that's right. And I helped get out the book Great Smoky Mountains Wildflowers, and the picture on the second edition, the enlarged edition, of that was rhododendron made on Andrews Bald.

SB: Were there any serviceberries on the bald or around the outside edge at that time?

CC: Perhaps around the outside, outside the edge. One other thing was on there--some haw. A few haw trees were in there.

SB: Were there any haw trees on. . . . You're talking about hawthorn?

CC: On Andrews Bald. None on Gregory.

SB: There were none on Gregory, and there were none on Spence at that time?

CC: No. There was some serviceberry on Spence.

SB: How big were they?

CC: Oh, they were twenty feet tall, six inches in diameter, perhaps.

SB: Out in the middle of the field somewhere or around near the edges?

CC: Off toward the west end, Tennessee side, just a few.

SB: But you don't remember exactly what the situation was on Andrews, whether there were any serviceberry out in the middle up there?

CC: I don't remember any serviceberry. Certainly wouldn't say there weren't any, but I don't recall seeing them.

SB: Were there any firs or spruces out in the center of Andrews?

CC: One or two isolated away from the regular spruce-fir forest. There were one or two standing out alone in the grassy area, not many.

SB: Just a couple. Do you remember ever visiting that little bog, the spring at the far end of Andrews?

CC: Well, the only spring I visited there was about half way down and on the west slope. Is that the one you're talking about? There's some orchids close to that, by the way.

SB: Do you remember any sundews there? It's got a ring of Sphagnum around it.

CC: I don't remember such details. In the early days of my hiking I knew almost nothing about the plants, but very soon I became interested in what I could see and what I could learn other than just the physical part of hiking, and I had the good fortune to hike with a number of botanists, and when they. . . . I developed a rather strong interest in, "What mountain is that and how do you get there?" and such things. "What plant is that, and where else might I find it, and why don't I find it somewhere else?" but hiking several years with those botanists, they sensed the fact that I was actually interested, my questions weren't just superficial idle curiosity; I really was trying to learn. And it's a rather ridiculous statement, but I remember hearing Dr. Hessler, who was head of the botany department at that time, make the statement that I knew a lot more botany than a lot of people who had completed the four-year course, and I never studied botany in a classroom in my life. But what little I did know was how to identify a considerable portion of the trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, just



by observing and asking questions. You can get a lot of information if you hike with the right kind of people.

(pause)

SB: This was Dan Myers going to Spence Field? He was 83?

CC: Just trying to think of the date when Jean did that. Well, I'm not going to try to pin down anything.

SB: It was in the thirties, anyway.

CC: An interesting thing came to light. We always felt that Gregory Bald and maybe Thunderhead were natural balds for a long time. Other mountaintop meadows we were pretty sure was not; we were pretty sure it was cleared. And talking with Dan Myers at that time, this was in the thirties, along the mid-thirties, at that time he was 83 years old, and he told us he made his first trip to Spence Field as a boy, the place we now call Spence Field. He said he was 16 years old. And at that time, the place we then knew and now know as Spence Field was a beech forest. So there's living evidence that it was cleared.

SB: Did he tell you when it was cleared?

CC: Well, he didn't remember when. He said his memory was pretty hazy on that, but he did remember he was 16 years old, and it was a forest, not a grassy area like it later became. And now the trees are crowding in there.

SB: We could probably figure it out. What date was your daughter born? When was your daughter born?

CC: She was born in 1918 and . . .

SB: So if she was a senior in high school, she was probably 17 years old.

CC: 1936, maybe, but I did work that out once to get the date that he was referring to, but I don't see any reference to it where I thought I had it.

SB: Well, that's good enough. I think I can work it backwards.

CC: We do know, well of course you've seen evidence that Russell Field was cleared. Few stumps still left there. I've seen an old hay rake in Russell Field.

SB: So that was farmed at one point?

CC: And I suspect that Spence Field might have been.

SB: What did they grow up there when they were farming?



CC: Maybe mostly grass. I think it was just grass. I didn't know what else. I never saw any crops growing up there. First time I saw Russell Field, it had already been cleared, but stumps were still standing, stumps two feet high. But I never saw any indication whatsoever on Gregory or on top of the high points of any other balds of any clearing. Probably might have been cleared way back, or it might have been fire, but whatever caused them to be bald in the first place, it's a definite fact, that we know, the grazing is what kept them open, because immediately when they stopped grazing, the grass instead of being three or four inches high, that first summer it was knee high, and it has never been shorter than that since then, just a tangle of knee high grass.

SB: So you were there the summer they stopped grazing.

CC: And many times after that.

SB: Were there as many cattle there towards the end as there were earlier on?

CC: Well, of course I . . .

End of tape

Transcribed by William Morgan and Mary Lindsay

Interview with Randolph Shields, Professor of Botany at  
Maryville College  
Interviewed by Susan Bratton, May 28, 1975

RS: . . . born in Cades Cove, 1913.

SB: Okay. This is on grassy balds on which you are probably much more of an expert than I am. I think the first question that we're interested in is what kinds of livestock were up on the ridge in the pre-park days and what sheep, cattle, what were the relative proportions, how many head, approximately, were there?

RS: I can't answer those questions as precisely as you would like. I do know that the sheep, cattle, and hogs, to a certain extent, plus other livestock such as the horses and mules were there. As far as the number of head is concerned, I have no idea how to try and relate things except that, of course, the horse and the mule population was much less than the others, and generally speaking they were from the Cove, more of those from the Cove, I suppose, than from outside the Cove. They usually did not put them up on the mountain until after the crops were laid by, about the middle of July. Then the mules and horses were taken up to the mountain tops and kept there until they were brought off in the fall, and they stayed, of course, pretty close around on the balds. The sheep also stayed on the crests. They didn't wander off. The cattle were the ones that were very bad to wander off, of course. Generally speaking, they would stay together in individual herds. Most owners would put a bell on one of their cows, and those that were associated with that particular cow would stay with her. This is the way, of course, the herders would locate them when they wandered off the mountain, was from the bell, and they would go off and drive them back up. They tended to wander very badly, cattle did. But as far as the balds are concerned, I suppose the biggest impact of course was from sheep and not so much from cattle, and this may have been why: Cattle tended to wander off a great deal because they don't like to graze around where there was sheep, or at least they don't seem to.

SB: Were there any differences from bald to bald in the types of animals that were brought up there or the way the herding was done?

RS: I don't think so, as far as I know. Of course the ones I'm familiar with are those around Cades Cove, and from what I hear about Silers Bald and Andrews and the others, they were pretty much the same.

SB: Do you know what breeds of cattle were most commonly used:

RS: Well, ah, back in those days most of them, I suppose, were general mixtures. Of course some dairy people out here in the valley would bring their dairy herd up that were dry, of course, during the summer months and put them out, but mostly they were beef cattle, the Angus and Herefords, general mixtures.

The concept of raising purebred cattle did not come into vogue in this general area until, well, about the time or after they started driving them to the mountains. The herds I remember seeing as a boy in the Cove were just mixed herds. And the people in the Cove didn't go in for pure breed stuff until the 1930's which was about the time when they couldn't herd them on the mountain anymore.

SB: When did they take them up to the mountain, and when did they bring them down?

RS: The cattle went to mountains usually early in April. One of the signs that they used to go by was when what they call the lamb's tongue was, got a good crop of that, then there was something for them to graze.

SB: What is lamb's tongue? Do you know what the scientific name is?

RS: Erythronium americanum.

SB: Oh, really? Several people have mentioned that to me and I didn't . . .

RS: Yeah, that's trout lily.

SB: So the cattle eat lamb's tongue, then?

RS: Yes, oh yes.

SB: What else do they graze of those vernal plants? Do they graze Claytonia and ah . . .

RS: I wouldn't know about that. Of course Claytonia is not Clintonia at least . . . prevalent in the higher altitude beech forest of course, . . . but I just don't know.

(interruption)

SB: Back to food items.

RS: Most of the . . . Well the cress and stuff that grows along in the wetter areas, you see, and the saxifrage too, the brook lettuce, and those types of things were grazed, at the lower altitudes and earlier. Of course the big cattle drive didn't get started to the top of the mountains until May when the grasses and everything came out, and then of

course the gathering of cattle started usually around the first of September, the first week of September, and the general rule of thumb was to bring them off the mountain by the first of October.

SB: Did they have to bring them down that early because of the weather, or was the grass just finished?

RS: No, it wasn't the weather as much as. . . . Well, maybe it was the weather to a degree, because the frost up there of course is early and a lot of frost-killed plants are not palatable, and some of them even are poisonous to cattle, and there's one plant particularly that they wanted to avoid their cattle eating as much as possible and this was the black snakeroot.

SB: Black snakeroot rather than white snakeroot?

RS: Well, probably both of them. Black snakeroot is the one that they worried more about than any of the others, ah, which produce milk sickness.

SB: Now it's black snakeroot rather than white snakeroot? It is not Eupatorium rugosum, it's . . . what is it?

RS: Cimicifuga racemosa.

SB: Oh, I usually call that black cohosh.

RS: Oh, black cohosh, well . . .

SB: Joint weed, ah . . .

RS: Cimicifuga and the Eupatorium both of course don't frost kill as quick as the others and after frost kill would be the only green stuff, herbage, down in the forest particularly, and the cattle seem to really go for it when it is the only green stuff around.

SB: Did you ever hear of any poisoning problems with Dicentra in early spring?

RS: Yes, oh yes. Not in the Smokies because I don't think you have enough of Dicentra concentrated enough for the cattle to eat it, in those areas particularly. Out in southwest Virginia when I taught up there, it was a very common spring thing down on the limestone bluffs. They were kind of pastures and the bluffs were not fenced out, and sometimes you'd get acres and acres of Dicentra on those limestone bluffs. Of course, the Dicentra never killed any cattle, but it would give them the staggers. A common name for it was staggerweed. That is what the farmers called it.



SB: Do you remember incidents of milk sickness in the Cove?

RS: Oh, yes, yes.

SB: Do you remember any cattle going down or any people having that?

RS: I have heard of people when I was a kid. At least they got sick, and it was called milk sickness. Cattle, yes. Fact is the last cattle that was herded on the Gregory Bald area was in 1935. They was supposed to have kept them off the bald, but they didn't. . . . And it was John W. Oliver's cattle. He insisted on running his cattle up there until the last minute and one of his cousins herded the cattle, and one of his sons herded there. They had a cabin at Doe Knob and they were running them there up Ekaneetlee and that area, and they were supposed to keep them away from the bald. 1934 was the last season that was herded, herded on the bald legally, that is.

But John Oliver run his up there, he had about 25 or 30 head and had those boys up there taking care of them, and he didn't get them off until about the middle of October and he lost over half of them to milk sickness.

SB: Really. The Eupatorium is much worse at certain times of year. I was discussing that with Boney Myers and he couldn't remember very many cows getting milk sickness. He could remember driving a few, one had dropped dead, it was beginning to tremble. And he said to the fellows that were driving it that they'd better let it cool down and they didn't allow it to. . . . But he said he didn't think it was that common, and he didn't know why it was caused, and I suggested it was white snakeroot, and he said well if it was white snakeroot every cow on that mountain should have had it, had the milk sickness. So you think it was a seasonal thing?

RS: I think it was a seasonal thing because they didn't . . . the cattle that I am familiar with up there and I worked with, ah, wouldn't eat the stuff in the summertime, at least there was no evidence of any browsing of it at all, and until the frost killed everything else, they would eat everything else and leave it standing there green, and it is one of the last things to frostkill.

SB: Now, this is Cimiofuga.

RS: Cimicifuga.

SB: What about the Eupatorium?



RS: Oh, the Eupatorium. Most of those are usually mixed in this forest. They were probably eating both of them, I don't know, because usually they are found pretty well together. Another thing they worried about with the cattle getting off low in the coves because that is where more of those things were of course.

SB: Yeah, this is the black cohosh again and not the Eupatorium so much down there.

(Following section of tape between parentheses was removed to repair tape).

(SB: Because there is a lot of it down there.

RS: A great fear late in the fall particularly in September if they didn't get 'em rounded up (unintelligible) did everything they possibly could to keep the cows from going low.

SB: Was there grass up there at that time? Could they have left them up there longer?

RS: Oh, yes. The grass (unintelligible) short and, ah, I don't know whether it would have enough forage or not for them.

SB: How low down did they graze that grass?

RS: Well, out on the bald, well again it was sheep that controlled that more than anything else, those balds looked like they'd been mowed by a lawnmower.

SB: So the grass is probably, what, an inch, two inches high?

RS: An inch, inch and a half, sometimes like that, yes.

SB: It was matted pretty much?

RS: Yeah. It was beautiful. And actually it was a park, an open tree park between the balds and down the ridges from the balds.

SB: Did the sheep and cattle nip off seedlings and shoots of woody plants out along those edges?

RS: Oh, no doubt they would have. No doubt that's what kept them, of course, I think that was shown pretty well by the work that was done up on Roan Mountain in the early fifties by Brown from East Tennessee State--do you have his work? He started the study there and no one's followed through for very long, but it was far enough to know. He fenced off an area there in the middle of the bald to keep grazing off of it, and in a couple of years the stuff was covered.

SB: Thinking again of the flora, was there much Potentilla or Rumex, out on those areas, the sheep sorrel, at that time? Some of those low matty plants that are very common up there now?

RS: I wouldn't have any memory about that but (unintelligible) service weren't conspicuous as far as I was concerned.

SB: What about blueberries and blackberries? Gregory right now is for picking blueberries. What was the situation back when you were a boy? You must remember about blueberries.

RS: Why yes, there were practically no blueberries on those open balds. Again, I think grazing kept them out, grazing stock. We did all our blueberry picking on the pine slopes.

SB: And I would say that blueberries on Gregory are much better than the blueberries on piney slopes.

RS: Well, many piney slopes where the blueberries they're practically gone because of a lack of fire. Oh, I think the deer, I don't know exactly how much they browse, but there's probably some indication they help, at least keep blueberries cropped back up there to new sprouts. The blueberry productivity depends on the growth of these sprouts. This is why the natives used fire, on those south slopes was used to produce blueberry crops. They didn't burn naturally as they used to say. Every third year somebody came along and set a fire to produce a good blueberry crop for next year.

SB: Do you remember any blooming serviceberries out on the open balds from some of your early trips up there or picking the blueberries ever?

RS: No, no.

SB: Not at Spence even?

RS: Well now, Spence I'm not too familiar with. I wasn't up there much when I was a kid.

SB: But none on Andrews?

RS: Well, on the other balds like Gregory there were serviceberries when I was growing up. They were all down on the lower slopes. There was just nothing growing out on those open balds.

SB: What about service around the edges? The edges at all. Was that oak?

RS: Mostly what was around the edges was oak and chestnut, a lot of chestnuts, big chestnut trees around. We used to go

up there at night in Sheep Pen Gap and pick up 100 bushels of chestnuts between the balds and around the balds.

SB: How much of that was open? Now Sheep Pen Gap has, right at the areas where the trails intersect, there is mostly small pole yellow birch at the moment. Was that completely open:

RS: That was completely open. That was an open park and of course the large oak trees standing there now and the remnants of chestnut trees, some of them are still around, that were in that area and it was open park.

SB: How far, to Parson's?

RS: Oh, all the way to Parson's. Of course you could just see it was open park. Do you know where the cache is out there?

SB: The fire cache?

RS: Well, it's a camping cache, really. The Park Service maintained it for quite a while at a spring which was between the balds about a quarter of a . . .

SB: When you come up to the intersection and drop over ridge?

RS: No, there's no drop over at all, or you when you're coming up Sheep Pen Gap, you're coming up that way, Sheep Pen Gap, turn right towards Parson's and a quarter mile out there a trail goes back to the right and leads to the cache. They used to have a tent and camping equipment, cooking equipment, canned goods, and everything like that. Emergency cache was what it probably was when the crew got called in after some activity . . . manage to use--I don't know where they maintained the other or not. What they did was to, well, one was a confiscated bear trap, which they used and another one which they made, they just took big drums and rolled them and welded the ends, made a door . . . pretty well mouse proof, rat proof and so forth, but I used it in summer of '62 I guess when I worked for the Park Service, I used it, and I don't know how long they maintained it. --Well, anyhow there was a cabin there, Nate Burchfield had a cabin in that spot and a clearing in that area and some gardening, and you could stand at the crest going toward Parson's where the present trail is, and see his cabin over there about three, four hundred yards, but now you can't see anything. And down the ridge if you recall, with the area coming up the Hannah Mountain Trail from Panther Gap, by the time you reach Panther Creek Gap, pretty well from there all the way to the top is open park type grove, and grass all underneath. Some patches of that grass are still pretty extensive there. That whole area in the spring of '61, or '62, I've got some pictures of it, they



had an ice storm up there, just a belt up there around under those balds, between the balds that looked like a mortar barrage had hit that area. Now the tree tops all that was broken fell off and, of course that is what has happened repeatedly over the last several hundred years, but this also was an explanation of the bizarre growth of some of those trees up there. And at that time, before that ice storm, that was still fairly open forest, but then all those tops, tree limbs falling in there which have just made it almost impossible to get through and that seemed to accentuate it to a degree . . . probably opening up the undergrowth, particularly the shrubby undergrowth, the Viburnum, things like that, but that used to be just parkland over the whole top.

SB: How tall were the trees, say at the edge of the bald at that time?

RS: Well, they were, um, not much different from what the full mature trees are now. If you are very careful you can walk there on the edge of the bald, that is, what used to be the edge, all the way around by following the big trees. Everything up in front of those, that are up above those, have come onto the bald in the last forty years.

SB: I think I know . . . little ones; the larger ones are usually oaks, in between that are usually different species, yellow birch, service berry, etc. You could see the Cove from the eastern end of Gregory. Could you see the Cove from the western end?

RS: No, not back on the western slope; it'd be impossible to see from the bald, the Cove goes in the other direction. But down on the eastern slope, yes, you could see, the fact is as I was talking to one of my cousins, not long ago, talking about how that had grown up, because he said he hadn't been to the bald, oh, since 1940, until you couldn't recognize it now, if he went up there. He said they used to stand on the bald there and look through the driveway and their barn in Cades Cove which. . . . But I know standing in my backyard when I was a kid growing up, you could see the bald, the grassy bald. You can't see any grass on the bald from the Cove as far as I know.

SB: Where were there structures like fences, cabins, gardens?

RS: Well, in the Gregory Bald area one of the original cabins supposedly dates back to the 1850's; well, I don't know if it could have prior to that. It was then on the North Carolina side of the Rich Gap area which was commonly known as the gant lot, where you top out going over the Gregory Ridge, and it was down on the North Carolina side, there was a spring near Moore Spring. But on the gap you're talking about where you top out, Russell Gregory was supposed



to have built a cabin, garden, and he set out fruit trees but he didn't live there very long. There also was houses up Twenty-Mile Branch, down below that hollow on the south facing slope of Twenty-Mile there was a place cleared out and was cropped and known and the Rye Patch. And down below that was a herder's cabin that existed for several years. And I used to go there as a lad and I have some pictures out here of people at that cabin. And then of course the gant lot was fenced--that't where they gathered the cattle and rounded them up in the fall, sorted them out to various owners. And the sheep pen was also fenced.

SB: Was the sheep pen at Sheep Pen Gap?

RS: Yes, right.

SB: Sheep Pen Gap--was it closer to the camp or right at the ridgetop? Was that right where the campsite is now near the intersection of the trails or was it closer to the spring down below there?

RS: Well, it was right there in the Gap.

SB: It was right at the ridgetop.

RS: Right.

SB: How big was that sheep pen?

RS: Oh, probably half an acre. (Inaudible mumbles). The herder's cabin in the late 20's and early '30's, up to 1934, was on the Tennessee side of Gregory Bald. That was accessible from two areas, from what we called the Fork Ridge Trail which is now the Gregory Ridge Trail, and as you're ascending the crest and then you start around the slope in the gap, you turn to the right there and went back about a quarter of a mile, there's a trail and there's a cabin there. From Panther Creek Gap from the other side, the trail was half way between Panther Gap and the bald, to go from the crest of the mountain down to that cabin site we used to would as you come up from Moore Cabin Spring and reach the crest of the ridge you just cross over there and drop off there to that cabin site which was maintained. And they had a big garden there, potatoes and cabbage mostly. These things would do very well and they had to fence those of course, to keep the cattle out . . .

SB: Just split rail?

RS: Yeah, they didn't split rails, they cut poles. The Rye Patch was fenced, I can remember when it was fenced and it was cropped. Wheat and rye was both raised there. People tried to raise corn, corn didn't do very well up at those

altitudes, I suppose because of the cold nights, but vegetable crops, cabbages, potatoes, things like that, did very well. They'd usually grow enough to, the herders would in their gardens, to give their own food late in the summer and . . . (unintelligible) . . .

SB: Was any food brought up to them from the Cove?

RS: Oh, yes.

SB: What supplies were brought up and who brought them?

RS: Well, the herder himself probably would come off, maybe on weekends or sometimes every other weekend or something and haul back his, whatever food he needed. All crops weren't raised there--had to be hauled up. Their diet was not the most variable in the world, but consisted mostly of corn-bread, fatback, and beans and potatoes, things like that that were easy to cook when men had to do their own cooking. And of course they did kill animals for meat through the summer . . . squirrels and there was always a big red squirrel crop along that mountain, up there, of course, they called them boomers, and the summer that I spent on the mountain, the summer of 1934, Kermit Caughron at that time was herding up there, and mostly his cattle, very few people from outside were bringing their cattle up. I graduated from college about the last week in May and I just put a pack of grits on my back and let out--I lived in Walland at the time, and walked through the mountains and on up to there and stayed up there pretty much all summer. I still had folks living in Cades Cove; my grandmother and aunt were there and I'd go off to the Cove and get food from time to time. At least, my share of the food, and Kermit would go off and bring up food too. But we killed, we never went out in the day without taking a rifle with us and any game we saw was fair game. Turkeys, by the middle of July, the turkeys was good eating size and they'd come out on the bald late in the evening to chase grasshoppers and various insects that lived in the grass.

SB: There were still lots of turkeys around in the thirties?

RS: Oh yes. I don't think Kermit or I, either one, will ever forget the time we went off down Twenty-Mile looking for some cattle that strayed off, and we were coming back up what's now call Long Hungry Ridge . . . used to be a nice trail up there, pretty steep and we met a big gobbler coming down the trail. Turkeys are sort of like DC-3's or something, they got to have a pretty long runway before they can take off. Well, we surprised him, of course he was coming down, coming around a bend in the trail, and we just met. Well, it was a little brushy along the side of the trail so he didn't attempt to take off, he just decided he had to turn around and head back up the trail, you see, to get up enough speed

so he could take off. And we just almost caught that old gobbler, until he hit a cleared space along the side of the trail where he took off to the side. We chased him, I guess, for a hundred yards up that trail trying to catch him. But we did get young turkeys. We'd have to slip out, of course, around the edge of the bald and come right up from the cabin late in the evening and get ourselves a young turkey for supper.

SB: Were there any problems with bears bothering the cattle or sheep at that time? Were they too afraid of people?

RS: No. Well, the bear population was, of course pretty sparse. Particularly, well, I suppose anywhere in the Park it was sparse, but particularly in the western end of the Park, it was just a very rare occasion that a bear would show up in that area. Most of the bear hunting was done by the people in Cade's Cove went back to Thunderhead and back that area and beyond there. There's where the bear hunting was done, back when I was growing up at least. But in there, every once in a while the herder would report a bear-killed sheep or something like that, but it was very rare.

SB: Do you ever recall any stories about panthers or wolves bothering sheep or cattle that people were keeping up high or down low?

RS: No, the panther story, at least that was told was at the Spence Field. And one of the Sparkses was herding cattle up there at the time and there was, he was supposed to have had an encounter, an encounter with a female, had some pups, cubs and he slashed, he supposedly slashed it with a knife, and then somebody, a couple of years later, killed one quite a distance from there that had a cut in the same general region. And that was about the last, and that was around 1902, something like that. And in this century at least, I doubt if there's been any panthers at all in the mountains.

SB: Do you remember any older stories going back about panthers on the balds or wolves on the balds?

RS: Oh, no, not wolves, I never heard any stories of wolves. However, some records which you've run across in the county courthouse there were bounties being paid by the state and in the 1830's and 1840's wolf scalps were turned in from the Cade's Cove, but not very many. So I'd say about 1840 saw the last of the wolves in the area. The state was paying three dollars a scalp for wolf scalps in those days. My grandfather, my great-grandfather, I guess it was, had an encounter with a mountain lion, rather as he called it "painter," that raided his barn and tried to carry off a newborn calf. But--which he killed with a knife. That was probably in the 1870's.



SB: So there were never any real predator problems on the balds?

RS: No, no.

SB: What about lightning kills?

RS: Now lightning kills was something else, now every once in a while they would kill whole herds of sheep. When I was a small lad, I guess seven or eight years old, we had some sheep on the mountain and a lot of other people did, too. And at Ekaneetlee Gap--now that whole area back through there, too, was park, along the top as well, the whole area was grazing, and we would simply take our sheep up Ekaneetlee Creek and just leave them up there in the gap, and they would just graze back and forth along the crest.

SB: Did anyone tend them at all?

RS: Oh yes, they were under supervision of the herder, the Gregory Bald herder in that area. He ranged out as far as Ekaneetlee Gap and then the Lawsons usually maintained their own herder at their area up there. Actually, I don't know if the Lawsons ever had anyone living up there or not looking after their cattle, but they had the area, from Ekaneetlee Gap back to Russell Field pretty well was Lawsons' territory, Lawson family's, and they used it for their own cattle.

But one summer they, word got off to us, at least a herder came off and told my grandmother that lightning had killed most of our sheep and some others too, at Ekaneetlee Gap. This was probably late in the summer. So my grandmother took all of us kids and my aunt and started early one morning, and we went up to Ekaneetlee Gap and pulled the wool off all those dead sheep. They'd been dead long enough until the hair had loosened up very well. Of course they didn't smell very well either, but she salvaged the wool from the sheep.

SB: Were the sheep kept primarily for wool, or did you ever eat mutton?

RS: Oh yes, primarily for wool, but we ate it. Usually lambs in the summertime, part of the so-called summer meat. You see we only ate mutton and beef in the summertime. It was very seldom, we practically never killed beef or sheep in the wintertime. That was all hog meat in the wintertime.

SB: Was any of the wool ever sold, or was it all used locally?

RS: Well, all that I can recall, well, of course our family we just used it. We never had enough. My grandmother just had enough sheep to provide her with the wool that was necessary for her own use.



SB: How many head was that?

RS: Oh, I don't think it ever exceeded fifteen.

SB: Did many other families in the Cove sort of come up with about ten or fifteen?

RS: Yes, they just ah . . . as far as sheep was concerned and cattle the majority of families in Cades Cove, they maintained only that which was necessary for their own use. Now a few of the larger landowners like the Myers brothers . . . at least in this country still growing up and prior to that there were still a few families that had large acreage and could maintain cattle herds for the market.

SB: So, say your family didn't drive, didn't keep cattle for the market?

RS: No.

SB: And when did they do the sheep shearing?

RS: Early in the spring, before they went to the mountains.

SB: Before they were taken up, and left to develop a full coat through the winter, and they were brought down again the same time as the cattle and put on pasture down in the Cove. And the families would just maintain a certain amount of sheep and . . .

RS: Yes, yes, that's all. You see, the amount of land owned by individual farmers in there was relatively small and the acreage wasn't such that it would support large herds of animals. And so they just maintained just what was essential for their own use as far as food and the wool and other parts were concerned.

SB: Did many families send cattle to Knoxville for sale? Did everybody participate in drives?

RS: No, I think only those that had, that raised for the market: Caughrons, and the Myers Brothers, Charlie and Goldman, and coming up, Andrew Shields, George Shields and Dave Sparks. These were the principal large farmers that had enough acreage that would support a herd of cattle for the market. Those were the big farmers, at least in this country.

SB: What did the herders do? What were their responsibilities?

RS: Their responsibilities were to see that the cattle were kept together, within the range, and kept salted. Salt was the important thing, and salt was also used to at least entice the cattle to stay along the crest of the mountain; they salted them mainly on the crest.

SB: Where were the salt blocks placed relative to the balds?

RS: Well, they weren't blocks, they didn't use blocks. Loose salt was used and it was put on rocks and logs and the salting rocks and salting logs. . . . On Gregory Bald, for example, on the southwest slope, I guess I could take you to it, was the main salting rock in that area. It was a great big flat rock, just about that high, and over the decades of salting there was scooped out areas around that rock. Now whether-- it was probably partly from the chemical action of the salt on the rock plus the action of the cattle licking it out. And wore out scooped out places. Last time I saw that rock was in the early fifties, and at that time the deer had actually excavated that rock practically, getting the salt out of the soil. I haven't seen it since the early fifties. I'd like to go back there and see exactly what had happened to it.

SB: I'd like to find that rock. That was down in the woods off the bald?

RS: Just within the edge of the woods off the bald.

SB: Oh, yes. That should be easy to find if it hasn't rolled.

RS: Wouldn't be too hard to find at all I don't think.

SB: How many salting sites were there? Say, around Gregory Bald?

RS: Well, I wouldn't know just exactly how many. The only one we used that summer we were up there was just that one rock. And then back over in that gap just above Moore Spring there was another flat rock that was used and along the crest right on Parson's, we had one on there and then back towards Ekaneetlee, practically every gap would have a log or a rock.

SB: How many pounds of salt did they put out each summer or, say on a per cow basis?

RS: Well, it varied. The summer that we were up there we'd always carry in a knapsack, we'd put about twenty pounds of salt in a knapsack each morning as we started out, visiting the various areas, and if there was no salt there we'd put out a handful or two, you see, and over the period of the summer there'd probably be as much as--, I know we probably put out three hundred pounds of salt that summer. Once back when I was a smaller kid we used to haul the salt up to the herder and one of my uncles, Joe McCall herded up there for quite a while and we had an old mule that was very docile, and so they let us kids, my brother and I, we put two hundred pounds of salt on the old mule and take the salt up

to Uncle Joe, and I don't know how many times in the summer-time we'd make that trip but we made a few. We'd go to spend the night and come back the next day. We'd walk up and lead the old mule carrying the salt and drive him back home.

SB: So you'd just have the salt tied on to a saddle?

RS: Yeah--well it wouldn't be a saddle. It was just . . .

SB: Slung over his back?

RS: Slung over his back.

SB: What did the herder do first thing in the morning, just go out and . . .

RS: Well, the herder got up in the morning, prepared breakfast, and usually have a work plan worked out, know where he'd got cattle to look for, something, just make a sometime check of the range and in particular areas where he wanted to spend the day and observe and listen for cowbells, and things like that, see if they'd wandered off and he'd usually pack a lunch which would be, he'd usually bake big old biscuits in the Dutch oven for breakfast, fireplace cooking all the time and then he'd take a slab of meat or something and just stick it in his pocket for lunch, and then he simply went out there and worked the area of the range, and then, as I said, practically every herder I knew out there carried a .22 rifle hung over a shoulder or something or other, and along in the afternoon sometime he'd try to spend a little time looking for a squirrel or something or other to kill for supper, and he'd try to get back into the cabin an hour or so before dark time to cook up a meal and eat supper, and by dark you were in the sack.

SB: So in the summer essentially the herder was out all day checking the cows and seeing where they were.

RS: Yes, yes.

SB: Did the herders stay out if there were heavy storms or did he have problems with the . . .

RS: Well, a heavy storm would run the cattle off, so after a heavy storm you'd have two or three days rounding them up. Because cattle head for low country in a heavy storm and this the . . . as they used to say the sheep didn't have any sense when a storm came up they just huddled together.

SB: And got struck by lightning.

RS: That's right and get killed when lightning hit 'em, right out in the open. They never bothered to go under trees or anything else, but cattle would scatter in a storm and usually after a big storm, a thunderstorm on the mountain, it took two or three days to get them rounded back up, get them back up toward the top. Now many times of course the ability to call cattle was a criterion; I suppose that "eliminated" some cattle herders. They'd stand up on that ridge and call and after a while you'd hear an answer way down in there some place or another back there and in another hour here they come up the ridge towards you.

SB: What kind of calls did they use?

RS: Well, ah-oooooo-cah! Something like that, you see and sort of long loud "who-cow" is what you usually say or "sue-cow" or something of that nature. Depends on the individual as to what you wanted to use, and your cattle were used to it. They'll answer and usually come in; don't have to go looking after them, but if they don't and you know they're down there . . .

End of tape-side.

They seemed to want to go off Twenty-Mile more than they did anywhere else, and there were long distances down there sometimes. You'd get two or three cattle to wander off and have to spend. . . . Well, Kermit and I spent three days looking for three cows that wandered off. And we finally found them way down on Twenty-Mile, found their track and tracked them down . . .

SB: And then you just cut off a switch or something and drove them back on to the top?

RS: Well, you don't have to cut off a switch. All you have to do is get behind them and start hollerin' at 'em and they'd take off. They seem to, it's a kind of interesting thing, they seem to . . . you run over a bunch like that, they tend to look at you suspicious-like and like they got a guilty feeling, you know, and yell at 'em a time or two and they head right back toward the top of the mountain, it's no trouble to get 'em going back. They seem to know that they've done something wrong and head back up the mountain. You get that feelin', you know, working with them. Some of them, some cattle herders, for example, Herbert Hodge, about the best there was. He had, I guess, what musicians would call true pitch. He could differentiate cowbells for miles and know exactly what group of cattle that particular bell was with. And all cowbells sound alike to me. I just can't differentiate between pitch at all hardly, but every cowbell is different. There's no two cowbells exactly alike, as far



as the sound they make is concerned. And they're made so if the cow that is wearing the bell is feeding, why then of course there's a continual clank, clank, clank. But if they're standing chewing cud, they can do that for hours, and they weren't making a sound, and every once in a while they'd shake their head or something or other or shake the flies off or something and you'd know that was happening by the sound they made with the bell if in the middle of the day and they're standing in a creek or something somewhere, close to a creek chewing, why there's not a sound made for hours. That's when you sit kind of disgusted and start looking for them if they don't answer your call or something like that.

SB: How frequently did that happen, that you had to spend three days looking for three cows?

RS: Well, it just happened to us once that summer, but we, you know how many cows you got and who they belong to, at least the herder does, and he must keep track of them. He makes his count, in other words, and if he finds there are two missing of Joe Blow's herd out there, he's got to find those two cows.

SB: Did they count all the cows every day?

RS: Well, not every day, no, but every time you run into a bunch you counted them and as I said the herds tend to stay together within the general area, since they're acquainted with each other they tend to flock and you always make an effort, in other words, to count. They carried a little pocket notebook which had got the number and who every cow belonged to and if there's some sort of earmark or something like that you've got to get that recorded so you can identify them but after a month of looking at all the cattle and identifying them, you can see an old cow along the edge, you know that it belongs to John Smith or something. You recognize them even if you've got two or three hundred of them.

SB: Do you remember the names of the families that were . . . were they just Cove families up on Gregory Bald or were there other families? Were there any from the Carolina side at all?

RS: No, all that in the history of herding, as far as I know, in that area, unless in the early days some of the Gregory's or somebody could have come from the N. C. side. But starting back in the 1880's particularly from them on it was all Cove families as far as I know. And I have a pretty good list of those.

SB: Oh we haven't talked about azaleas yet. We should probably talk about azaleas and where they were on the bald. Do you ever remember any azaleas flowering on Gregory at all?

RS: Not in the . . .

End of Tape 1. Following is beginning of Tape 2.

(Note: the first 3/4 of this tape is barely intelligible because the tape dragged during recording and hence sounds abnormally fast when played back at normal speed. The transcript is a reasonably accurate paraphrase.)

RS: In the pre-Park days, the azaleas were not on the open bald, only the tall true form back under the forests off the balds was quite extensive of course on the ridges leading off the bald. The azaleas on the open bald, Gregory, at least, came in after grazing stopped and reached by the early '50's. Grazing on the bald stopped in 1934 and by twenty years they had reached their peak. And of course it was that time that forest succession was also, as far as the speed with which it was coming in peaked the same time. It's progressed, of course, and has progressed rapidly ever since. The understuff back off the bald seemed to fill in first, that is, the understory developed under the forest before it worked out on the bald. The azaleas in pre-Park days were under the forest cover and were tall, tall plants and probably were not available for cattle and particularly sheep for grazing. There is a possibility, at least a theory of mine is that particularly, well I'd say, on a rim around the margin of the bald, probably out about as much as 100 or 200 feet there were probably azaleas, but the sheep kept them browsed back but they grew enough annually to maintain a root system, and then as soon as they stopped grazing or when we saw the blooms come in first in any quantity, in that marginal area and then they seemed to spread out along the bald, however there some areas of the bald never seemed to have azaleas on them. They seemed to be more or less in patches and since the early 1950's I would pinpoint the peak population of azaleas around 1952, in that area, the first five years of that decade. Since then going downhill, that is they're being eliminated by the ingrowth of the forest species. The Crataegus, of course has been one of the weed species that came into the bald and there's pretty good patches of that place to place then a few pines and a few of the Kalmia had come in in various places. But the blueberries invaded the bald fairly early and by the late 40's particularly they were being noticed by an awful lot of visitors and people began to go to the balds to pick blueberries.

SB: But you don't ever remember picking blueberries as a boy before?

RS: No, there never were many blueberries picked in pre-Park days on the balds. All the blueberry picking when I was growing up in the Cove was on the south slopes, pine slopes and lower ridges. The large bush, the tall bush blueberry

that has grown on the margins, I've never seen on Gregory to any extent, but at Spence field, especially on margins and particularly Silers Bald there they were quite prominent. Just exactly how long they have been there I don't know. I've never observed the highbush blueberry--I believe that's erythrum, Vaccinium erythronium.

SB: There is one that Camp called catawbiense, a highbush. There is an erythrocarpum--that's really a spruce-fir blueberry.

RS: It's quite common up in the spruce-fir areas on the Mt. Rogers area that I worked on in southwest Virginia. It was a quite common one.

SB: That one I don't like the flavor as much.

RS: It's a bit tart. The thing that's been so remarkable to me in observing that whole area up there is how the undergrowth has filled in all the park area around the bald and particularly between the balds. That tremendous park, it would be typical, when I first started studying ecology and patterns of distribution and so forth of cover types it reminded me more of your typical description of a savanna than anything else.

SB: Do you feel that that was maintained by grazing?

RS: Definitely was maintained by grazing.

SB: How much cutting was there up around those on the bald edges?

RS: I don't know the extent of cutting at all in the Gregory area but I do know the Spence Field area was cleared completely and the Russell Field, and they're not natural balds at all. Now, how much was cleared then back towards Rocky Top and Thunderhead I don't know. Probably some. But I do know Spence Field was cleared because I found records of that in my research on the history of the Cove.

SB: Now, how much cutting--for instance firewood cutting or cutting to make cabins, animal pens when that was done?

RS: That was done in the immediate vicinity of course and did not make any great impact. It--logs for building the cabin, and the cabins had to be rebuilt. Oh, I'd say you were lucky if the cabin lasted ten years. Most of them five years about the life of one because usually hunters or somebody in the winter would let fires get out. They built big fires when it was cold and those fireplaces couldn't take big fires, they were made primarily for cooking and small fire type things. The people using the cabins in the



wintertime built big fires and that was the end of them, they usually burned down. The chimneys themselves were just rock; they usually picked big flat rocks and daubed them with mud. They wouldn't last an awful long time, and they had hole(s), and you get a big fire in there and it would reach the logs.

SB: What kind of furnishings did the cabins have?

RS: Mostly built in. One big bed built out of poles and usually with boards with straw mattresses thrown on them. Most of the cabins had a lean-to which also had a big bed in it. I've seen as many as eight people sleeping or so in one of those beds. It reminds you a great deal of overnight shelters along the trails as far as the sleeping is concerned except the construction is a little bit different. But the cabin was probably maybe twenty feet long and eight to ten feet wide. The one door went in toward the front where the fireplace was and then from about four or five feet from the side of the door all the way in was the built-in bunk sort of thing, straw mattresses on top of it and sleep quite a few people on it.

SB: Any tables and chairs?

RS: Ah, yes, a table usually again a structure built against one wall, usually over the side of the fireplace and sort of oddly constructed chairs. In some cases they would take chairs from their homes in the Cove.

SB: Dirt floor?

RS: No, it was puncheon floor. They may have had dirt floors earlier but it seemed to be desirable to use a split log puncheon type floor--split the log once and lay it flat, flat surface up. All the cooking of course was done at the fireplace, and they usually had an iron structure for hanging pots over the fire as well as the so called Dutch ovens for cooking bread and other things in and covered kettles also for putting into the fire for cooking.

SB: Were there that many visitors?

RS: Oh, yes. They seldom were lonesome, particularly in the summer. One of the biggest problems was sometimes whole families showing up there or groups of people showing up to spend the night. Of course most of them brought their own food and didn't have to worry about it. Of course, the biggest problem was sleeping everybody. Sometimes fifteen to twenty people would be sleeping in the cabin at night. Created quite a problem.

SB: These are just families from the Cove?



RS: Yes. Herders, too. I have one very interesting photograph of a whole family, a very, very large family that was visiting a herder and the cabin was down on Clairmont Creek, below the Rye Patch. They stayed a week as sort of a family vacation. Crops laid by, not much to do, so they went up the mountain to spend a week with their cousin who was herding cattle up there at the time and they picture out in front of the cabin and the papa and mama at this end and it looked like a staircase going all the way down to a little three year old on this end after about eleven of the kids, and it's really a fascinating picture.

SB: Do you have a copy of that?

RS: Yes.

SB: Were there many guests from say outside that area up there? Were there many people on the ridge that were not local people in those days?

RS: Occasionally people from local areas out in the country around Maryville would come up for a day or two, ride horseback or something of that nature and stay up with a herder. Usually from the north or some would have cattle up there come up in the summer and visit, take a look at their cattle to see how it was coming along.

SB: So actually he was pretty active up there.

RS: Oh yes, there was activity going on.

SB: What do you think would happen if the larger trees or the larger shrubs were removed?

RS: They would grow right back, but if they removed . . .

SB: Assuming you got rid of the roots, too.

RS: Assuming you got rid of everything, the grass would probably go in if you could keep, of course the first thing would probably be coming in very thick around . . . (unintelligible) . . . brackens, things of that nature, around the marginal forest, forbs of various and sundry types. Gradually if they're kept open then that mountain oat grass would probably take over.

That is what came in . . . (unintelligible). . . . But I think to maintain it would require grazing animals.

SB: Do you think that would be more effective than just cutting?

RS: Oh, yes, much more effective than cutting because the effectiveness of cutting is just like the effectiveness of

grazing in Cades Cove. The only reason in the world they're permitting that is to keep those areas open. It's very expensive to maintain those open areas.

SB: How many animals, would you say it would take, say you clip the edges back?

RS: If you clip the edges back and let your grassy area get reestablished I'd say 50 head of sheep for the grazing season.

SB: That could be taken care of by one herder?

RS: Oh, yes, very easily. And you wouldn't have to fence for sheep. If you put cattle up there you'd have to fence them. But sheep will stay in the open area without fencing, particularly if they're looked after by a herder.

SB: Do you think that the sheep if you were careful enough about sort of instituting your grazing and cutting back a little at a time the areas would withdraw back to the forest edge?

RS: Yes, I'm convinced they would. Of course those large bushes of . . . (unintelligible) . . . that developed were one and open area probably should be maintained but the smaller ones should be brought back, I'm sure.

SB: Do you think that for instance if all the shrubs are removed at once, that is if all the hawthorns and pines were cut back off do you think the azaleas and blueberries would stand the removal of the canopy over nearby them for the first few years? Most of them are still growing.

RS: Yes, and the thing that has given this kind of growth has been the competition of growing those kinds of plants. Those that grow out in the open and have grown out in the open without that have made sort of a closed cluster.

SB: Could they bloom any better if they are in the open?

RS: Yes, they produce much better.

SB: So the best thing to do is completely clip away the shrubs?

RS: Yes, I'd say clip them back, even the taller shrubs, if they're pruned back they will branch and bush and have more bloom. I do that with azaleas on our own lawns, keep them clipped so they branch more.

SB: Do you think a minor bit of sheep browsing might do the same thing?

RS: Well, possibly; it may completely prevent the growth of the small plants.

SB: What about sheep grazing on some other pattern, not annually? Every third year or . . . (unintelligible). . . . For instance, if there were to be grazing on Gregory, I don't think it could be done commercially; I think the Park would have to pay for it. By the animal grazing . . . (unintelligible) . . . and if you broke even, you'd be doing very well.

RS: Of course I'm sure you can find sheep growers in the area if you look to put the sheep up there in the summer. But I'm pretty sure you would have to have expensive equipment.

SB: Yes, I've heard it is more expensive to . . . (unintelligible) . . . Well, for instance, if you were going to keep Gregory open, what would you do?

RS: If I were going to keep Gregory open first thing I would do I'd go in there and cut all the woody stuff back. The lower story I would cut all the way back to the margin.

SB: Would you cut some of these small poles out from under the larger oaks? Under the margins, that is your . . . (unintelligible) . . .

RS: Well it wouldn't hurt at all to go back into the margin and get your grass back in that margin once you got it that way. Now I think to do it effectively and as quickly as possible, I would go with the recommendations of using herbicides on the stumps. There is a herbicide that is very effective on the stumps. Get your herbicide, apply it to the stumps, and within a year it obliterates everything. And it also speeds up the decay, and it kills and prevents sprouts, which is the important thing, and I would figure on a minimum of five years in the removal of those woody species and then another five years for a general recovery of the grass. You may have to reseed the area.

SB: Do you think a little light grazing pressure may speed up the recovery?

RS: Oh, yes, definitely.

SB: Putting some grazing pressure on it would probably take care of some sprouts too.

RS: Yes, I'm pretty sure they would and I don't know how effectively sheep graze on sprouts. I've observed in southwest Virginia they graze effectively to keep the beech back. Areas up there that have been fenced, that is grazed areas have been fenced and the beech don't go down the fence, and they eat sprouts more than anything else. I just assumed as

the grazing has been removed from the area up there the beech sprouts have just gone up jump and run as soon as they were released.

SB: How would you protect the sheep from lightning and bears?

RS: Bears are probably the worst problem and I think the only way to protect them you would have to worry about at night, would be if a marauding bear got into them and you would take steps to remove that bear from the area, but you would have to remove him. But you'd have to remove him one way or the other. But the lightning, I think you'd just have to take your chance on that.

SB: What would you figure, you'd probably lose a herd every five years?

RS: Five or ten years; it's not that common.

SB: But you could allow the sheep to herd together in the middle of August standing in a storm?

RS: If you saw a storm coming, you could scatter them.

SB: That wouldn't be a natural thing for sheep to do. You could move your herd probably, but I don't think you could scatter them. They wouldn't move back under the trees, would they?

RS: They don't tend to.

SB: The herders never move them back?

RS: No. They weren't there at the time in the first place. The herders themselves aren't going to be caught out in that open bald during a thunderstorm, regardless of how many sheep that might be killed. You're a prime target up in the open on the bald during a thunderstorm. They're the highest thing there, and the closest way to the ground in lightning. When the thunderstorm started they did just like the cattle do-- going off those ridge crests . . . (unintelligible, 2 sentences).

SB: (unintelligible).

RS: (unintelligible).

SB: Do you know any good stories concerning things that happened on the balds? Interesting events up there? Do you know how Tom Sparks got shot on Spence Field?

RS: I know exactly how Tom Sparks got shot in Spence Field. Tom Sparks, they were making whiskey up there and . . .



(unintelligible). . . . He was a what they call a simpleton and he wasn't as bright as he should be and he couldn't take teasing very well and in fact what was happening they were drinking and I don't know whether he was or not, but a lot of people were involved and Tom Sparks went riding by and . . . "You don't have to take that, shoot him," so he shot him.

SB: Just picked up a rifle.

RS: Shotgun, yeah, leaning against the wall in the cabin.

SB: What happened to the boy who did that?

RS: I think he got a couple of years, something like that.

SB: Was there any whiskey-making on Gregory Bald?

RS: Oh, yeah. There was whiskey-making. Not right up on the bald, but back in the hollows off the bald . . . (unintelligible). . . . Right down in Chestnut Flats and in the (unintelligible) back up on the stream somewhere at one time you find a (unintelligible) as you go up the Gregory Ridge Trail before you leave the creek and start back on the ridge. You're going up the creek some three hundred yards of open area and that was occupied by a Burchfield family for a good many years. Nobody ever visited it very much except the Burchfields, and they had a big still up there. Made whiskey there for years. I had a conference with one of the sons who was raised up there. Still alive, and he said he grew up there as a boy they were making whiskey there practically all the time.

SB: (unintelligible). Chestnut Flats?

RS: Stillhouse branches all over the place. The Stillhouse Branch, that branch that used to come by where I was raised, there was a stillhouse branch, too comes (unintelligible) that hollow back up a ways and used to be stills along that and particularly up around that hollow on Railroad Branch. Back when I was a boy there was stills in that whole area.

SB: Was there ever drinking at roundup time? Let's talk about roundup time, I think that's a worthy topic.

RS: Oh, yes, definitely. Of course the cattle owners that went up and helped with the roundup in the evenings they always brought out their demijohns, the fruit jars and other things with the white lightning and stuff in it and they had their drinking parties in the evenings. Usually at the beginning of the roundup thing somebody would kill a steer, butcher it, and it was used to feed the people up there rounding up. There'd usually be one person the party designated as cook and he'd prepare at least one big meal a day

at suppertime and that was usually followed by drinking. It was hard work during the days so they just didn't have a sort of party where they'd drink themselves into a stupor, they just simply enjoyed their whiskey and had their parties. The type of party that was associated with whiskey making was called a backin's party. This usually followed a big runoff. It takes a while you know for the mash to ferment and then to run the thing off. A batch about every six weeks or so is about all they could afford. At the end of a runoff they would usually bring the backin's in out of the stillhouse to someone's house and have a backin's party. Now the backin's is that last part of the fluid that come over and condensed from the still. It's usually fairly low in alcohol, but yet it's got enough in it to make a difference if you drink enough of it. It's used for proofing the earlier runoff of whiskey, bringing it to proof, diluting it or whatever is necessary to get it to proof. Most of the old whiskey makers proofed simply by sight. That is they put it in a bottle or fruit jar after it was cold or cooled off and then they would shake it, the head as they called the bubbles that foamed on the top, the length of time it took the head to hold gave them a pretty good idea of what proof alcohol it was. An expert could proof it almost within four or five percent. Then the backin's was brought in, usually a gallon or so of it, and this was heated up and spiced, not boiled, just heated and spiced, still had its alcohol content.

SB: Spiced with what?

RS: Well, all sorts of spices, ginger and all that sort of stuff, you see and then they would drink it hot.

SB: That sounds really good.

RS: It would be and they'd sit around and drink, usually have a big chicken fry or something to go along with it--chicken and dumplings or something.

SB: This is both men and women at these parties?

RS: Oh yeah, people of the families that were involved.

SB: Kids, everybody?

RS: Oh, yeah. And at one of the backin's parties was when Chicken Eater John Tipton was killed by Smoke Sam Burchfield. They were having a backin's party at Ike Tipton's place and several men were there that were relatives, neighbors. It was right at election time, right after election time in August, and the Republicans hadn't done too well. This was in 1902. And Smoke Sam was the only Republican in the bunch and Tipton was a Democrat and they were riding Smoke Sam with a little alcohol and they giving him a pretty hard time.

Smoke Sam wasn't the type of fellow who could be kidded too much and he kind of smoldered underneath and so about an hour or so before dark, this was in the summertime so it didn't get dark till late, he just wandered off and nobody knew where he went. And just before dark, right at early dusk you might say, Sandra Tipton, who was a deaf mute, but she could make a sound, and so she said "Ah, ah" and pointed out as Smoke Sam was coming in the gate and Chicken Eater John simply said, "Well, I'll go out and see what Smoke wants: and thought he'd just gone home and come back. So he went out to see what Smoke Sam wanted and Smoke Sam shot him. He'd gone home and got his pistol and come back to get his revenge I suppose over the ridin' he'd been getting and he would have shot anyone who'd come out there, it just couldn't have been Chicken Eater that he'd come back to shoot. He just shot the first man that came out.

SB: What happened to him?

RS: He got three years in the pen but he only served less than a year of it; he was a very old man at the time. He got sick and they sent him back home and he died within a few months after they sent him back home.

SB: What about the parties up on the ridge, they were mostly men, weren't they?

RS: Oh yeah, that was all men, no women were involved in those. Never. They were all male chauvinists, I suppose.

SB: How long did it take to round up those animals?

RS: Oh, usually about a week. They got them all in and sorted out.

SB: So people would come in for what, a couple of days?

RS: They usually held them there in the lot and while they were being held there they became fairly gant, that's why it's called a gant lot. They had plenty of water, they would get all the water they wanted, but no food. No grass or anything on those lots. They were tramped down and muddy places by the time they got through rounding them up. Then they wanted that because they didn't want to drive off there and all the way back out to Maryville on full stomachs. You see, they wanted their guts pretty well empty. That way they wouldn't lose as many of them. At least that's what they thought. I suppose in the big western drives they'd stop occasionally and feed a day or two. But they were driving hundreds of miles then but they started out on the gant. They wouldn't let them eat too much on the trail. But the farthest drive they had coming, from the mountains was of course right in the back county, Maryville area, and usually one day's drive was all they had. They usually would start



early morning and back as a kid they'd usually make it in around three or four o'clock in the afternoon driving in from out here. And they'd go through the flats of the mountains and they'd try to make it up on into the mountains by dark. Early in spring, sometimes they wouldn't and they'd simply get permission to drive 'em in somebody's fields down there to hold them overnight and go on the next morning. But most of the time they could make it through in a day.

SB: Did they ever have any disease or parasite problems that you could remember, like did they have outbreaks of disease?

RS: Not among cattle as I can recall as much. Of course there was always outbreak of cholera among hogs. Sometimes all the hogs would be wiped out at one time with cholera.

SB: No problems with sheep?

RS: Not that I can recall, no.

SB: No hoof and mouth, no anthrax, no nothing?

RS: No, not at all. I don't recall any trouble at all.

SB: You weren't afraid of parasites or anything?

RS: Well, of course, the type of parasites kids had in 'em, everybody had in them. They thought at one time it was probably hookworms. Now right after World War I the public health people made a big drive through the southern Appalachians to eliminate all those sorts of things. The first job was of course to build outhouses, nobody had outdoor toilets or anything, before that time, and the health people, I don't know whether it was a state or national program appropriated money at least, and they hired in every community two carpenters to make the rounds building outhouses and you had to furnish the lumber. And I can remember it was a big fuss made when guys came to build our two sheds across the creek, and we had to round up all the lumber and dig the hole; men just built the houses, it used to take them about two days. The other drive was they sent public health people into the area collecting samples of feces and other things to make a survey of what sort of parasites might be present, and of course we all had ascaris; everybody knew that. You didn't have ascaris without knowing it. And that killed an awful lot of young kids. If you go into the graveyards over there, all over the southern Appalachians, you see a lot of kids. An they died in the summertime, and nine times out of ten it was ascaris that killed them. But castor oil was given to cure the bellyache you see.

It was usually associated with green apples because just about the time green apples got big enough to eat



kids always ate green apples and they got bellyaches . . .  
so the association. And to cure the bellyache they'd give  
castor oil.

SB: That is pretty strong stuff.

RS: Well, that's the worse thing in the world you can take  
for ascaris because that cures it to form a ball in the  
intestine. . . .

End of Tape.

Paul Adams, pre-park Smokies hiker and founder of LeConte Lodge. Interviewed by Susan Bratton, Park Biologist and William Morgan, volunteer, August 3, 1975 at Adams's home in Crab Orchard, Tennessee

PA: I was born in Paxton, Illinois, September the fourth, 1901. Paul J. Adams.

SB: When did you first come to Tennessee?

PA: In 1918. The fall of 1918 my parents moved to Bamanta, Illinois; (I) started kindergarten with her (his wife); we are kid sweethearts. Then we moved to Decatur about 1910 or 11, and then to Burnsville, North Carolina about 1914. And of course, me having already been in the Ozarks, I had to climb every mountain there was over there. (Mr. Adams relates his first climb in the Smokies and Mt. LeConte.)

But really my learning the Smokies begins in 1919 or 1920, and I was determined to learn the whole range. So I started in, naturally, down at Parson Bald. I started at Calderwood where I started from . . . and then into the old Deal's Gap Road up to Ridge Road, that old sled road that went up on Parson's. Then I found many more ways to get into Parson's and Gregory's. But they've changed so many of those streams up there now that it's pitiful. I can't keep up with it.

WM: The names you were getting back then were maybe just from the local people?

PA: Nope, nope. They were on the Geological Survey maps of that time.

WM: Then the Park Service came in . . .

PA: Then the Park Service came in and found seventeen Mill Creeks in the Park and had to change the name of the one off LeConte to LeConte Creek, and I don't blame them, because I can remember when there were seventeen tub mills on that one creek.

SB: What did Parson and Gregory look like the first time you saw them?

PA: Grassy.

SB: How big were they?

PA: I would be afraid to estimate the acreage on Parson and Gregory. I never estimated it ever, I don't think, in my journal even that I kept at that time. I really don't know.

SB: You were saying before it was hard to tell the difference between them.

PA: It was, because they had . . . just like that film on Gregory's there. . . . They had cut out a lot of the trees in order to get grass to grow, so that they could herd sheep and cattle and horses up there, but on Parson and Gregory there were no stumps. They had been cleared prior to my going up there, but I heard about it from some of the old timers such as Nathan Burchfield.

SB: What did Nathan Burchfield say about the clearing? Who did it and when?

PA: He did part of it, and part of it was done in his father's day.

WM: When did you talk to him? Was that about 19--?

PA: About 19-- . . . I think I met Nate Burchfield about 1919 or 1920.

WM: And it had already been done? The clearing had already been done by then?

PA: Yeah. And the grass was very, very luxurious. A man in 1921, I think it was, '21 or '22, he was herding 5,000 sheep up there at the time. Now "Uncle Nate," as the mountaineers called him, was part Indian. His hair came down below the shoulder, and he had a beard. I've had many interesting times up there with Nate Burchfield.

WM: What bald was he on? Where was his cabin? Where was he at?

PA: His cabin was down near this spring I showed you a picture of.

WM: At Moore Spring?

PA: It was just a shack. It was a frame and then covered with clapboards.

WM: The herders were friendly to hikers then that really showed an interest in coming up in the area, and they would help you out then and if you needed it.

PA: Oh yeah, yeah. Now Nate, of course, kept whiskey around his place all the time. He made it. The best stuff I ever got from him, though, was muscadine brandy. Now just muscadine brandy . . . It's so powerful that you just can't drink it by itself, so he split it, half with corn and half with muscadine brandy.

And I know that stood me in good stead a year or two after that when I had worked over to Thunderhead 'cause Sidney Klent and I had started on over to Silers Bald and were coming back to Spence Cabin for the night. Well, here was Tom Sparks, John T., his son, and Wade, his son, all up there at Spence Field herding cattle and horses and makin' whiskey down on the North Carolina side. Now Sidney went down to their still later on and took several pictures, and I told him, I said, "Now, Sidney, if you go down there, I say you want to remember one thing: Those fellows are going to resent it." But Tom wants some pictures. Now I says, "If you go down there and those fellows resent it too much, for God's sake have enough sense to pick up a piece of wood and put it in the furnace; then you're just as guilty as the rest of them." I said, "I've done it many times, and you might as well do it." But there was three generations of Sparkses up there that summer, and I think that was the summer of 1923, either 1922 or 1923.

WM: Where were the Sparkses herding during that summer?

PA: Spence Field. Well, Nate Burchfield claimed he owned 5,000 acres of that land up there on Gregory Bald. I don't know whether the old man did or not, but he claimed he did.

SB: Do you remember when Tom Sparks was shot?

PA: Yeah. I was living on the top of Mount LeConte then. If I had known it, I would have gone to his funeral. (He tells how he made friends with those people in Cades Cove by bringing them ammunition whenever he went to the mountains.)

SB: Did Tom Sparks ever tell you any stories of things that happened at Spence Field, or did Nate Burchfield have any good stories about things on Gregory?

PA: No, not particularly. I think Tom Sparks was a better story teller. He told one night, it was a beautiful night. Some people had come up with a team and wagon up the Bote Mountain to Spence to camp, and we were sitting out there near the pinnacle of Spence Field and Thunderhead listening for foxes, and Tom told of the time that he was attacked there at Thunderhead by this panther.

SB: You remember the details of that?

PA: No that hasn't been published.

SB: You remember stumps around Spence Field, around the edges. What part of the field were they on?

PA: They were on the North Carolina side mostly. They were slowly enlarging it.



SB: What about the piece going up Thunderhead? You know where it comes off the flat and you go on up the slope . . .

PA: That's always been bald; that's always been bald.

SB: Do you remember any stumps on the other balds? Like at Silers or Andrews?

PA: I remember some at Silers, even in 1925; and down at Andrews, there stumps there, too.

SB: On the edges?

PA: On the edges of the fields. They'd cut those, drop them and use the tree for fire wood of course, but they slowly enlarged three places, Andrews and Silers and Thunderhead.

SB: Who was herding at Silers and Andrews in those days?

PA: I can't think of the man's name. He lived there in the Hall Cabin. He was from North Carolina, but I can't remember his name.

SB: Was that mostly sheep, cattle? What did they have up there?

PA: That was sheep and cattle both. Down at Andrews Bald, I don't believe I've ever been to Andrews when there was actually any herding going on, because that was an offshoot of Forney Ridge. I have been back to that bald a time or two since I left the Smokies.

WM: Have you noticed that it is grown up?

PA: It's growing up, growing up fast.

SB: Up on Gregory in the twenties, what were the azaleas like? Were there any around the bald edges?

PA: Oh yes, yeah, lots of 'em.

SB: But not on the bald? Were they on the balds?

PA: Not right on top of the balds; not right on top of the balds.

WM: Were the herders paid by the families that grazed?

PA: Yes, I think so. I knew a Mr. Murray down at Chilhowee that drove his cattle in on Gregory's and Parson's, oh, every other year. Anyway, he'd drive his cattle up there, and Nate Burchfield would take care of them for him and salt them.

And the only thing I remember about the Russell Place was this enormous gant lot, and of course there the cattle at the end of the season were driven into it and separated by crops in the ear and by other markings, so that every man could claim his own. But as far as a bald being there, there wasn't any. It was what we would call bald like at Parson's and Gregory's.

WM: This was at Russell?

PA: This was at Russell.

SB: How big was that gant lot?

PA: Oh, that gant lot must have covered an acre and a half or two acres. Had divisions, all made out of rails, split rails made out of chestnut oak, mostly.

SB: Do you remember there being bears around the balds or the herders having problems with bears?

PA: None to speak. Once in a while they'd come in, but they have more bears up there now than they did back then.

SB: Do you remember any other stories about panthers or wolves?

PA: Well, of course in my little Mount LeConte book, I tell about the wolf we had there on LeConte, but I have never seen a panther in the Smokies nor any tracks. I have seen them in North Carolina and been chased by 'em in the Blue Ridge, but I never seen any in the Smokies at all.

SB: Do you ever remember any fires on the balds? Any burning up there?

PA: You mean forest fires?

SB: No, I mean did you ever remember the settlers setting those areas on fire or the forests surrounding them?

PA: No, no.

WM: What about lightning killing cattle or sheep or horses? Did you ever hear of that?

PA: I've heard of it; I've never seen it.

SB: You must have been there for the big forest fire that came up the side of Clingman's Dome or the fire that came over the Bunion.

PA: Oh, I was there on Mount LeConte during the Bunion fire, and the Champion Fiber Company didn't try to do a thing about it. Finally the rain came. It never crossed into the Tennessee side. I do remember another forest fire they had up there. They had one above Cherokee Orchard about 1923 or 4. But they got that one out. There on Balsam Point, Andy Huff lumbered that out there for three or four years, about '23, 4, and '25. He took out the select timber. Then a fire got in there in 1926.

WM: This was on the slopes of LeConte?

PA: Yeah. It was after I had left the top of Mount LeConte, but I remember that fire very plainly.

SB: How big was that fire?

PA: Over most of that. It was between the shoulder of that ridge that runs down towards Park Headquarters and the one that comes back towards Bullhead. They fought that fire. I remember twice that we had to go into the valleys, my two boys and myself, and help fight small fires.

SB: Back to the balds again. Do you ever remember any berry bushes on the balds or around the edges back in the twenties? Say, serviceberries around the balds?

PA: Oh, serviceberries were thick around the edges, and some huckleberries and some high bush, some low bush. I don't remember any winter huckleberry in there.

WM: At Spence or at Gregory's.

PA: At both of them.

SB: How did the edges look then? Were they relatively clear due to the grazing?

PA: Yes. They were relatively clear. And then of course you ran into your shrubs and then your trees like any other natural balds. I've always held that those balds up there were natural to begin with. Of course all of them were enlarged by man when he wanted to herd his flocks up there in the summertime.

But they would bring them in within a two or three week period. Word would get out that Burchfields were going up there or Sparks was going up there, those other people were going in, and they'd be receiving cattle and sheep. You know how news travels in these mountains.

WM: You said old Nate Burchfield thought he owned the land up there. Had he been living up there before he started to herd up there, or had he been up there so long that he thought he owned the mountains?

PA: That might have been. He lived in North Carolina when I knew him, and he came up there to herd sheep, and he always came by Deal's Gap and then hiked on up.

WM: None of them would stay there all the time, then.

PA: Well, in the summertime when they were herding, somebody would stay there with them all the time, with the herds all the time.

WM: I mean, did the herders stay, live on the balds year round?

PA: No, no. They'd all come off in the winter time.

SB: Wasn't the Russell Place a running farm part of the time? The Russell Place at Russell Field?

PA: Yeah, yeah. And on the North Carolina side, if I remember distinctly, there was quite a farm house, and a good spring.

SB: Were there many people going up to visit the balds when you were around there?

PA: No, not too many, not too many.

SB: The Sparkses sold whiskey, though, didn't they?

PA: Oh yeah, Laws yeah, they sold whiskey there. They brought a lot of whiskey down, too. They brought it down and would take it into Walland and into Knoxville, other fellows would. Once bought a gallon of whiskey from John T. Sparks.

SB: What did you pay for it?

PA: Eight dollars a gallon, two dollars a quart.

WM: You said you remember when he (Tom Sparks) was shot. Do you remember any of the surrounding events?

PA: He was shot in the back.

SB: Tom Sparks?

PA: Tom Sparks, shot in the back.

WM: A drunken foray?

PA: A drunken foray.

WM: It sounds like that the people who hiked the Smokies back then were the absolutely dedicated type. Nobody else got back in there.



PA: They were the dedicated type, naw.

WM: People like yourself and Harvey Broome.

PA: Yeah. If we couldn't find a trail, we made one. I mean we got to our destination all right. I've been lost up in there many, many times, and I've always righted myself, and I've come out to find out where I made the mistake. Because back then your Geological Survey maps were not correct. And often we would have to climb a tall tree to find out how the main ridge ran.

End of tape

Transcribed by William Morgan

This tape was lost after it was transcribed, and therefore I have not been able to check the correctness of the transcription or restore portions that were deleted by Mr. Morgan. M.L.

Shan Davis interviewed at his home in Townsend, Tennessee  
by Mary Lindsay, December 9, 1975  
(Mr. Davis was slightly deaf and therefore failed to  
understand some of the questions)

ML: Can you say who you are and when you were born and where  
you were born?

SD: Just speak it out?

ML: Yes.

SD: I was born right back up here three miles at what they  
call Dry Valley. I' ninety years old; I was born in 1885,  
twenty-second day in May.

ML: Did you herd cattle up on the ridge?

SD: Oh, they used herd cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, mules--  
they kept a lot of cattle and horses up there.

ML: Where did you herd, up on Gregory or on Spence?

SD: Spence.

ML: And about how many cows did they keep up there?

SD: Oh, some years they would have a thousand head.

ML: And sheep at the same time?

SD: Well, I don't know how many sheep. . . . The mountain was  
covered up with sheep, and hogs, too. Horses, mules . . .

ML: A real mixture.

SD: Yeah, that's the way people used to make their living,  
keeping cattle and sheep on the mountain.

ML: Did any of the old people ever say they started taking  
their cattle up there instead of keeping them down . . . ?

SD: Well, they didn't have no pasture for them. You see,  
back then they didn't have no pasture, so they would take them  
to the mountain to herd 'em.

ML: How far away would people take them up there?

SD: Oh, they would come from Knox County, Sevier County,  
all around.

ML: Were they mostly young cattle brought up to gain weight, or were they older ones?

SD: Yeah, they would take them up in the spring. Then all together at the fifteenth of September, the people would go back in there and herders would gather them up, and they had a gant lot to put them in.

ML: Where was the gant lot on Spence?

SD: Well, Tom Sparks. . . . There's different ones. Old Tom Sparks stayed there twenty-five of thirty years, him and Fonze Cable. Made a little liquor up there once in a while.

ML: How much did Tom Sparks charge to look after people's cattle?

SD: Well, he charged a dollar a head. He would herd them all summer for a dollar a head.

ML: What about the sheep?

SD: I don't remember just what he charged for sheep. Of course I've had sheep up there, but I don't remember now what he charged for sheep or hogs. He charged so much, but not like he did for cattle.

ML: How did they keep the animals from wandering off into the woods?

SD: Well, they wouldn't come out of there; they'd stay there. There's good pasture there, you know.

ML: So you never had the problem of chasing the cattle out of a cove lower down or anything like that?

SD: No, only in the snow. As you know, when it came a big snow, I had some up there and drove them into Cade's Cove and kept them until the snow went off. Did you know there was this bunch that died up there? One time when it came a big snow and they couldn't get them off, there was about two hundred head of cattle died up there.

ML: Was this in the spring?

SD: Yes

ML: Did they get milk sick up there?

SD: Yeah, they got milk sick, but they did (unintelligible) get as many at the Russell Place as there is on down the mountain. As there is at Gregory's Bald. I had some die up there that was milk sick.

ML: What did people think caused the milk sick?

SD: Well, sir, they never did know. People would have it if they drunk the milk. You could catch it off that milk. But, now, the people knowed where it was at. At the fall of the year, it would just come at the fall of the year. And they would get them cattle out of there. People, where it was at, they would get fenced where cattle couldn't get into it.

ML: Where were these places that they fenced?

SD: Well, there was one at what they call Fodderstack; there was milk sick in there. A big cove off from Russell place.

ML: Did they ever cut down any trees for firewood?

SD: Yes, they had a cabin. They go (unintelligible) a chimney to it. They kept a fire in it.

ML: Where did they cut these trees, just from out of the woods?

SD: Just out of the woods from around that cabin.

ML: Did anyone ever cut down trees to make the field larger? Can you remember that?

SD: Yeah, you see, it was all cleared. All that land along top of the mountain was cleared and sowed in grass. There was people who used to live up there. Old Bob Spence used to own that and live there at the Spence Place. That's why they give it that name.

ML: About when did they cut all the trees down?

SD: Well, there was a guy who took a sawmill up there one time and sawed it, John Martin. And hauled it off the river up there and shipped it, when the company shipped that way.

ML: Where exactly was this mill? Do you know?

SD: I don't remember.

ML: And when was this, about 1860, 1890 . . . ?

SD: . . . 1910 when it come down that big snow. What makes me remember was I was married then, 1910. You can see how long I've been married. I was married third day of April 1910.

ML: Did they ever set any fires up there?



SD: Oh yeah, that mountain burned off many a time. Get a fire in the fall of the year when it was dry, it just burned up everything.

ML: Did people set it on fire on purpose?

SD: Well, I guess they did. They'd always get out in the spring of the year and maybe throw down a cigarette or something. But people made a living up there off cattle, hogs, and sheep through the summertime. They could take them up there and bring them off and sell them that fall.

ML: How much weight would a young heifer or steer gain up there in a summer?

SD: Well, some of them gained two hundred pounds. Some didn't gain that much, you know.

ML: What was the price of beef then?

SD: Oh, they was cheap. Cattle was three or four cents a pound, and sheep was about five or six cents. They was cheap. I used to drive them from North Carolina. I would go over there and buy a bunch of cattle and drive them into Knoxville.

ML: Somebody suggested that maybe people from North Carolina would come up on the ridge top and stop at each bald for a couple of days and let the cattle graze when they were driving them a long ways. Did they do that?

SD: Yeah, and a lot of cattle was stole. People would go up there and drive them off and sell them.

ML: Hard to catch (them), I suppose.

SD: Yes, people had a hard way of making a living back then.

ML: Yeah.

SD: It wasn't like it is now. Everybody got money, but back then you didn't have it.

ML: Were there any blackberries or blueberries up on Spence Field?

SD: No, there was sarvis; sarvis grew up there, but blackberries and blueberries didn't grow up there. It was too cold up there.

ML: It's not too cold for them now. Where was the service growing, out in the open or around the edges?

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SD: Now on the Spence place, there was different place and then you know where the Russell place is.

ML: Yeah.

SD: I guess you been there. Well, they herded on all them places.

ML: Yeah, I know.

SD: There was a guy used to have there at the Russell place a barn there, and he had a mowing machine and rake there.

ML: He actually grew hay there and mowed it?

SD: He would keep his cattle up there through the winter time. He raised turnips to feed his sheep.

ML: I guess that place was almost as big as the Spence Place.

SD: They didn't keep them at the Spence Place through the winter.

ML: Yeah, I know.

SD: But they raised cabbage at the Spence Place, and potatoes.

ML: Did they grow pretty well?

SD: Yeah, they grew good. Irish potatoes and cabbage made good up there. But they wouldn't put them out until May.

ML: Was Tom Sparks in charge of the cattle on Thunderhead too, or did somebody else take care of them?

SD: Oh, they brought them from everywhere. Sparks just herded them.

ML: Yes, but did he herd the ones on Thunderhead, too?

SD: Yes, yeah, he had all that back to the Derrick. Derrick cabin; I guess you've been up there.

ML: Yeah, I've been up there.

SD: They may have changed the name of all the cabins now. . . . They have pretty near everywhere else.

ML: Was the Derrick area all open? Did you graze cattle around there, too?

SD: Yes

ML: That's really grown up. Were there any rhododendron or laurels?

SD: No, just anybody in that cabin; most of the time it would be full of people of the night.

ML: Were there any azaleas growin' up there?

SD: Yeah, there used to be. But I think they've grown up now. I've not been up there in thirty years.

ML: It doesn't look like any of the old photos now.

SD: You know, it used to be no trees there or nothing on that bald.

ML: No shrubs or little bushes either?

SD: Naw (unintelligible) . . . there were sarvis berries. That was about all that grewed there.

ML: Some trees around the edges, but no other trees or shrubs around there, right?

SD: Yes. Now it comes from thunderstorms up there too.

ML: Did you ever have any animals killed by lightning?

SD: Oh yeah, lightning killed horses and cattle every once in a while. . . . I've been there when I got caught in the rain, and it rained so hard I couldn't face to it. . . . We used to go up there and camp. My wife has been up there. We used to go up there and stay a week at a time. I guess now they do too.

ML: They're not allowed to stay there a week any more--you have to move on after a day.

SD: It's been thirty years since I was up there, maybe longer.

ML: Did the cattle eat any particular plants more than others, as far as you know?

SD: They just grazed on that grass.

ML: There wasn't much else up there, no goldenrods . . . ?

(Someone, SD's son, I think, enters and sits down.)

SD: He's been up there when he was just a boy. I've had six boys and four girls.

ML: That's a big family.

SD: It takes a lot of corn bread and potatoes to feed them. . . .  
Did you talk to Bonehead? (Roy Myers)

ML: Yeah, we've talked to Boney.

SD: He's been up that mountain before.

ML: He has a lot of interesting stories.

SD: They used to herd cattle on the Defeat.

ML: That was all woods, wasn't it?

SD: On Defeat Ridge, when they got to building that road there, they aimed to build it up that ridge, and they got to see they couldn't do it. They came back and run it up Bote Mountain. That's what gave it that name.

ML: That's not the story they usually tell. You mean they just couldn't get through that way?

SD: They couldn't go up the Defeat. It was too rough.

ML: There weren't any fences except for the gant lot and around the cabbage patch?

SD: Yeah, you see, when they gathered them cattle in, they would build a big lot, and they would drive them into that lot. People could go over there and get them.

ML: Did they have water for the cattle in the gant lots?

SD: No, they didn't get no water. They would like put them in today and take them out tomorrow.

ML: So it didn't take long to sort them out, them?

SD: You know, people had it hard back then.

ML: Yes, it wasn't an easy place to make a living.

SD: There weren't no money, much.

ML: Of course, there weren't as many things to spend it on, either.

SD: No, but you didn't spend none because you didn't make none. . . .

End of tape

Transcribed by Warren Banner, December 10, 1975

Corrected and edited by Mary Lindsay



"Uncle" Jim Shelton at his home in Maryville, Tennessee,  
December 12, 1975. Interviewed by Mary Lindsay;  
transcribed by Warren Banner and Leonard Terry

Note: This was an attempt to repeat an earlier conversation  
at the end of which it was found that the tape re-  
corder was not running.

ML: How old are you now?

JS: On the 21st day of next April, I'll be 90 years old.

ML: And how old were you when you started herding cattle?

JS: Oh, I was in my teens then. I don't know just what year  
but I was in my early teens.

ML: And, you were working for Granville Calhoun?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

ML: And, you were taking care of his cattle?

JS: Yes. His brother-in-law, Jim Russell, and me were great  
friends and me and him worked together and would take care of  
these cattle, go out and hunt them once a week and take a bag  
of salt and salt them. Call them up, they would come just as  
far as they could hear to get that salt.

ML: Where did you stay when you were looking after them?

JS: I stayed with Granville Calhoun's wife. They lived there  
along the creek, but he did not stay at home much, but I  
stayed right there at home with his wife and children.

ML: Where was their home?

JS: It was on the creek they called Sugar Fork.

ML: How many cattle did he have?

JS: Different numbers; as I told you a while ago we had 48  
head that was belled and 49 head muzzled and that . . . be  
around 50 head. (Muzzles were described in previous conver-  
sation as being made of wire).

ML: What were the muzzles for?

JS: To keep them from picking this ivy shrub as they went up  
the mountain and getting poisoned. It'd kill them.

ML: What did this shrub look like?

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JS: Well, it was shrub similar to the rhododendron which we call laurel. But it had little short leaves, and grew down low. Just like that. This rhododendron would grow way up here high. Both of them evergreen, stayed green all winter.

ML: What were the flowers like on the ivy?

JS: Oh, they were just a little cone shape with different shades in the color and little red specks all in them inside. (A subsequent conversation with Arthur Stupka confirmed that by "ivy" Mr. Shelton meant Kalmia latifolia).

ML: What time of year did you take the cattle up there?

JS: Well, it would be in early spring.

ML: Did they have any other kind of animals up there?

JS: At Spence Place they did but not up at Hall Gaw Top they did not. Up at the Spence Place they had mules, horses, sheep, goats.

ML: Who took care of the cattle on the Spence Place?

JS: Man by the name of Sparks. I forgot his first name.

ML: Was it Tom Sparks?

JS: That's the name. Tom Sparks.

ML: Were you herding up on Hall Top?

JS: I didn't . . . I would stay all night up there ever once in a while with Jim Russell. That was Granville's brother-in-law, and I would go up there and help him go out and hunt these cattle up and salt 'em. I would stay all night with him up there once in a while. I didn't stay up there, make my home up there. I stayed down there at Granville Calhoun's. I was working for him. He was a-payin' me.

ML: Did Russell have a little cabin up there?

JS: No.

ML: He just slept out in the open?

JS: No, Jim Russell, he stayed down t'home.

ML: You just went up there once a week to take care of them?

JS: Yeah.

ML: What time of year would you take them up there?

JS: In the early spring.

ML: Was there a plant that came up at that time that was particularly good for them?

JS: What? How?

ML: Can you tell us about the lamb's tongue?

JS: Oh, that was a very early spring greens that come up back there in the Smokies long before anything else come up. It grewed up everywhere back in there and just thick as a meadow on a farm. Them cattle they'd go up there and get fat on that lamb's tongue.

ML: Did they ever get milk sick up there?

JS: No, not up in there they didn't. Way back on another prong of the creek there was plenty of that milk sick back in there.

ML: What caused it?

JS: A mineral that was in the ground. And this mineral would come up to the top of the ground, and it tasted salty and the cattle would lick at it. Milk cows that give milk, it wouldn't kill them but it would kill the people that drank it. And the dry cattle, it would kill them right now.

ML: Was there less of this on the mountain tops than there was down in the coves?

JS: No; u-huh, it wasn't up on the mountain.

ML: Did the cattle eat rhododendron or azalea when they were up there?

JS: In the winter time, if it happen to come a snow up there in the early spring after the cattle was put out, these cattle would gather around in the low ground where this rhododendron grewed, and they would pick that and eat it. And there was winter fern that grewed thick down in the low grounds, and they'd pick that winter fern and eat it during the snow.

ML: Did they eat the azaleas?

JS: No, they was a flower. That azalea was a flower shrub.

ML: They didn't touch it?

JS: No, they didn't bother it.

ML: Do you remember anyone cutting any trees around where you were or on the Spence Place? Did you hear about that?

JS: Sheep?

ML: Trees. Did they ever cut them down?

JS: Trees, oh! (Pause) No. They didn't have no business a-cuttin' trees, only to build cabins and fence in their little farms up there.

ML: What did they grow up there?

JS: They grew corn, Irish potatoes, beans. They had to have early corn and beans because the season was so short they didn't have much time to grow 'em. But the Irish potatoes grewed in the ground, and they would have to dig them before the freeze come. They'd dig big holes in the ground and gather grass and stuff and put in there and they'd put them Irish potatoes down in there and build a big mound up over them; cover them up with bark and stuff like that and pile dirt upon them to keep them from freezing. They would keep potatoes all winter that way.

ML: Did they stay up there all winter?

JS: Did people live up there?

ML: Yes.

JS: Yes, those Sparkses did at Spence.

ML: What did they do in the winter? A lot of hunting?

JS: They just hunted. There was lots of game, you know. They hunted a lot and they had plenty of wild meat to eat all the time.

ML: Did you ever hear any stories about any people or animals being bothered by panther or bears?

JS: What? I didn't understand you sister. I'm sorry.

ML: Can you tell me about the story of Tom Sparks and the panther.

JS: Tom Sparks, oh, yes! You know back at that time they didn't have nothin' but the old muzzle loading rifle to shoot with. And he had a big long barrel muzzle loading rifle and he'd come in off his hunt, and he was very thirsty and just got down on his hands and knees to drink out of the spring. That panther was a-followin' him all the time around above the road. It climbed up in a tree right over that spring and he didn't take time to pull his shot pouch off



and he had that big dagger (hunting knife) in a scabbard, and that thing landed on his back and he was very quick. He knowed it was up there, and he knowed when it hit him that it was that panther. He just jerked that knife and struck backward like that and he hit him a dead blow; killed that panther right off of his back.

ML: Were there any huckleberries or blackberries growing up on the mountain top?

JS: Yes, there was plenty of blackberries and huckleberries, too. Those blackberries that grewed back in the mountain were not like the berries we had down around the farm. Great long, great big berries and just as sweet and the best things you ever eat.

ML: Were these actually on the grassy balds or were they down on the lower ridges?

JS: Yes, the blackberries they grewed up everywhere up there on the ridges, and the huckleberries they grewed out on the dry ridges. . . .

End of first side of tape

ML: Were there any big trees growing out on the middle of Spence Field?

JS: No. Lightning killed all the big trees, but the little rocky patches there were saplings and bushes that grewed up.

ML: Did the cattle browse on those at all?

JS: The shrubs?

ML: Yes.

JS: No, they had plenty of grass. Shucks, the grass was up knee high. They ate that grass and lots of turkeys up there and grasshoppers and them turkeys just got fat on them grasshoppers!

ML: What kept the cattle from wandering off?

JS: They didn't keep them from wandering off. Once in a while. Of course the herder kept looking after them, and if one was missing, he knowed how many there was. He got to hunting after 'em. People up there in Cades Cove and Dry Valley if they'd come down in there would just capture them and keep them till they come back next spring and they would just pay 'em for the feed bill, and take their cattle right back up in there again.

ML: How many people that you know of would take cattle up to the Spence Place?

JS: Well, a number of different people. There was some people by the names of Loves. They call them the Love Brothers way back down here in Blount County. They would take a whole big drove of cattle up there. They would go right along with them. They had a shepherd dog that they put 'em on that Bote Mountain Road and if one of the cattle bolted on the gang and run off above or below the road that man would just call in that shepherd dog and point at it and "Bring 'em back in there." That dog would just get around them and bring right back into the gang. Save them men from running aroun' trying to keep 'em in line.

ML: Were there ever any fires up on the mountain?

JS: I never knowed of any fires up in there, right then. Never heard of them 'till after the Smoky Mts. Park bought all this and took over. When they took over they didn't allow a dog in the Park unless it was tied and a collar on it. These rangers was mean! They catch a dog back in there and they'd just shoot him and kill him and drag him off somewhere and they threw him over. When they got to killing their dogs like that, they burnt that park up! They had to quit killing those dogs. They'd catch the dogs and find the name on the collar and then notify 'em and they'd come in and get 'em and pay them a board bill and give 'em their dogs back again. They quit killin' them dogs.

ML: No one ever set fires up on the fields to keep the grass green or anything like that?

JS: No, not till after the Park took over and got to killing them dogs, then they just tried to burn the Park up. I remember one man that was sort of a smart-aleck ranger, Jim Liden(?), he went back there in Cades Cove, he heard a dog a barkin' and he went to that dog and there was a boy there with that dog; had a ground hog treed in a hole and he just went up to this boy and told him that he'd have to arrest him, he wasn't allowed to hunt in the Park. That boy had a shotgun setting there and he just raised up and got that shotgun and throwed on him and told him to get out of there. Some asked him what he done and he said, "You can't fool a boy like that, he'll kill you!" He made him leave him alone. I heard this park ranger tell that.

ML: Did people have any stories about how the balds became balds? Why there weren't any trees?

JS: It was very plain. That Smoky Mountain was so very high that thunder and lightning just played down on the ground.

I've been up there myself when the lightning , you could see it in the green grass flashing all along in there. That lightning killed all that high timber, that's the reason there's a bald.

ML: Did lightning ever kill any animals?

JS: I never knowed of it killing any up on the mountain, but down in the farms where they had wire fences, them cattle would, come up a quick storm they would run for shelter under trees along that fence and that lightning would run that fence and them cattle standing all around there against it it kill a whole row of cattle sometimes right on our wire.

ML: Did bears or panthers ever get any animals?

JS: Every once in a while they would, yes. There's a place way back in there in the foot of the Smokies where that Newfound Gap Road went across the Smokies that they called the Sugarlands and black bears would come in there every once in a while and kill some of their cattle.

ML: When did you bring the cattle down off the mountain?

JS: In early fall when that cold weather began to kill the range back up there they would get them down right quick and take them home and feed them.

ML: Did they usually keep them through the winter or did some people take them off to Knoxville and sell them?

JS: No, they sometimes sold part of them, young cattle, and they'd keep a herd to take back next spring.

ML: Why did they graze them up on the mountain top instead of low down?

JS: Because that grass growed growed up there, that grass, it growed knee high, tender; cattle'd get fat on that grass.

ML: Was it better than the grass that could grow lower down?

JS: It didn't grow lower down, it growed more up on the top of the mountain 'cause it was bald and made shade trees to shade it. That's the reason it growed so big and tender up there.

ML: Were there any serviceberries growing up on the Spence Place?

JS: We local people, we call them sarvises, there was plenty of them and there's big trees that grow up there and them bears they'd climb them trees and reach and get a limb and



break them trees all to pieces. And the chestnut trees the same way, they killed all of the chestnut trees and what they didn't kill the blight later killed.

ML: Did you eat a lot of chestnuts when you were up there?

JS: Oh yes! We'd go out and pick 'em up and take them to market and sell them, get good price for 'em. There was a market square, they call it, over there in Knoxville and it was free parking there around that square, big market house. We'd go in there and if we find a parking place we just back up in and sit there until we sold out.

ML: What did you do after you stopped herding cattle for Granville Calhoun?

JS: Well, I grewed by that time and made a young man, and I got acquainted with my father-in-law and hired to him to work by the month for him and he was paying me \$10 a month and my board and washing. That was old man John Walker, had long gray whiskers way down a here and there was two or three John Walkers and they had to give 'em nicknames and they just called him "Hairy John." While I was working with him, I fell in love with one of his daughters and married her and raised my family right in there; and he had two farms and I rented one of the houses and move out in it and I raised my family right in there, and there was seven of those sisters, and they just called them the seven Walker sisters. I was a photographer at that time too; that was before Kodaks was made. I would go out over the country and take that big camera on my back making pictures and Eastern Kodak Company come in and went to making Kodaks, filled Sears Roebuck Stores full with Kodaks and put me out of business. . I quit making pictures.

ML: Did you take pictures of people? Portraits?

JS: I took pictures of anything. That camera, it was one of the best cameras made, had the best set of shutter on it, that squeezed the bulb to make an exposure and it had three-track bellows, run that there out and focused it on a group of people or one, or scenery, anything I wanted to make a picture of, and I got pictures here that would take you a half a day to look at all of them that I made over the Smoky Mts. I had old glass plate negatives and I sold Smoky Mountains National Park \$100.00 worth of those negatives. I made those pictures before the Smoky Mts. Park was even thought of, I guess, and they wanted to see what it look like before the park took over, and I furnished them pictures there and they give \$100.00 for a certain bunch of them negatives. I've got a lot more now they are wanting but they can't locate me I reckon.



End of Tape

After the tape ran out Mr. Shelton mentioned some other things including:

A snowstorm in May of one year that killed many cattle. One man down in a cove was able to keep his cattle alive by cutting basswood limbs to feed them.

Arthur Stupka, first Park Naturalist of Great Smoky Mountains  
National Park with Susan Bratton and Mary Lindsay  
Twin Creeks, December 15, 1975

AS: Well, back in those days, of course, they didn't have these big square salt blocks, and they would cut depressions along a fallen log. If there wasn't a fallen log, why, they would bend a tree, and eventually there would be a fallen log, and then in these depressions spaced along the surface of this log, they would put, of course, salt. Over a period of years the crossbills got to know about the fact that there was salt there, and as you know if you are familiar with crossbills, they are extremely approachable when they're feeding on salt. I know that at the old CCC camp over here at Sugarlands, about a mile or so above headquarters, they used to make ice cream and made their own ice cream. They used rock salt, and when they were through, they threw the rock salt out on the ground. The crossbills got to know about the rock salt, and you'd almost have to kick those crossbills out of the road in order to get by, no kidding. It seems kind of ridiculous, but they're so crazy about salt. That of course is why people call them salt birds.

ML: Did you talk to a lot of old people when you first came here?

AS: No, I must say I did not. There was a person here by the name of Joseph Hall, Joseph ?. Hall, who got his Ph.D. on linguistics but (unintelligible) prepare a publication (unintelligible) Park Service, something like that. And he went around with a very quaint and primitive type machine, but technically (unintelligible) they were very poor recordings. (unintelligible) collect the data. He got, oh, stories of the mountains, songs, and ballads. He got some cooperation.

ML: Did you lead a lot of nature walks to places like Andrews and Gregory?

AS: Oh, yes. As I said, when I first arrived in '35, the Superintendent was too much occupied in establishing 17 CCC camps. At 200 boys per camp that was a lot of manpower, and therefore he said, "We're not going to start on a tripping program at this time. It'll only worsen our situation." He said, "The thing for you to do is to get acquainted with the Park and build up your study collections," and that went along for between four and five years. In 1939, in our first program of guided hiking trips and tours through the Parks there were times when I was the only one, especially during the War years. But we kept up the tripping program and even went to Mount LeConte on a regular schedule. It was scheduled once a week overnight on the Alum Cave Trail, down the Boulevard, and when

we got down to Newfound Gap on the second day, why, being in uniform, I had no problem of thumbing a ride for my customers down to where the cars were parked at the Alum Cave parking area and made a round trip of it. But later on the powers that be said, "No, you're naughty. You shouldn't do things like that." And, you know, I can't abide by those kind of regulations. I did it anyway, and nobody was injured. They were concerned about somebody being injured, you know, after they got a ride at Newfound Gap and before they got to five miles down to where the Alum Cave parking area. But it made a round trip possible, and we continue it today. Of course we went to the popular places. Laurel Falls was a frequent suggestion, Alum Cave Bluffs and Ramsey Cascades and Rainbow Falls.

SB: When was the first time anyone was in Gregory? The first year you were here?

AS: I arrived in October, middle of October, '35, and I don't think I went to Gregory till the next year.

SB: Were the azaleas in bloom at the time you were up there?

AS: I'd have to check. I'm not sure. I know that on Spence Field in that year, there were cattle on Spence Field. I took a picture of them with a little pocket camera, and that picture was in my files for some time.

SB: Do you remember what the azaleas on Gregory looked like in the early days? Were they there on the bald?

AS: No, I don't remember.

SB: They were there, though?

AS: Oh, yes, yes.

SB: But you don't remember whether they were out on the bald or . . .?

AS: There were some out on the bald in little islands here and there, but I think the majority were all in the trees.

ML: When did people start thinking that Gregory was a good place to go and get blueberries?

AS: Oh, I can't answer that. I don't think that was the main reason why people went to Gregory, in my time at least. It was the azaleas. It was always pointed up as the outstanding flower show of the Smokies, period, even certainly overtopping the rhododendrons. Of course I'm speaking in the layman's language. They are both Rhododendrons. But I've always told people that if they really went to see rhododendron, they

should go to Roan Mountain instead of going up to the Alum Cave Rocks, which is certainly not comparable to the show that you get at Roan Mountain. Gregory's was simply an objective for azaleas in the latter half of June.

ML: Was the view of Cades Cove a point that people liked about that, or had it pretty much grown up by then?

AS: The view from where?

ML: The view from Gregory of Cades Cove.

AS: Well, I don't think you could see much of Cades Cove from Gregory as I recall. Certainly not the view of Cades Cove from the Cades Cove--What's the nature trail that starts in the campground--and there's a view of Cades Cove from there which is far better than the one that you have from Gregory. There are some nice views from Gregory's, but I never thought the view of Cades Cove was particularly outstanding from that point.

ML: I was just wondering. . . . I can see how that north edge would have looked like this old photo of Carlos Campbell's, but the south edge now is such a tangle. It's completely different forest. Do you remember what that looked like?

AS: It looked quite open, as I remember. It looked very much like that in the years that I was in the Park.

SB: How far down did that opening go into the woods? Was that pretty much open oak-chestnut below the grazed area?

AS: It was oak-chestnut, oh definitely.

SB: So there wasn't . . . Was there any clear boundary at all between where the open forest edge stopped and the older less disturbed forest where the glens got started?

AS: Well, I'm not sure I could answer that.

SB: Do you remember any Amelanchier around the edges of Andrews back in the '30's?

AS: I don't know about the edges. There was some here and there scattered on the bald, and of course they are at Spence Field and elsewhere.

SB: Back at that point in time, say '35, '40?

AS: I would say they were there in the '30's, yes.

SB: Very strong on Andrews?



AS: One of my favorite plants. Did you ever hike the Appalachian Trail to Silers Bald in late May when those Amelanchiers were in bloom there? That was quite a sight. They have big Amelanchier there. You know, they get to be big trees.

SB: The record for the Park is down there.

AS: The record for the Park is about a mile beyond Silers from toward Thunderhead. That tree is up near the state line. That tree must be nearly two feet in diameter.

SB: I taped that one. I think it's about fifty feet off the trail, AT, Carolina side, two feet, three inches or something. It's 120 feet tall, which is huge. It's a big shadbush.

AS: That's quite an Amelanchier.

SB: The show on Andrews in some years, not every year, is pretty good.

AS: I've always been interested in Amelanchier from the standpoint of here in the lowlands. . . . There can be a great range from the time it comes into bloom over a period of years. In other words, I had one spotted down lower Little River, not far from the great rock overhang which I had in my journals. There was a range of five weeks over a period of years from the time that first came into bloom. The earliest, as I recall, was about the third of March and the latest must have been about the earlier part of April or something like that. At any rate, there's a stretch of five weeks over a long period of years when that would first start coming into flower. But that range would narrow down at higher altitudes. So when you get up to spruce-fir, instead of having a difference of five weeks when that thing would come into bloom, it would be shortened down to maybe two or three weeks, because your seasons up on top are more diverse. Spring comes later. In other words, there were some years when you could get Amelanchier blooming in early March in the lowlands until late May in the upper Smokies. It's quite a range. Very few plants, whether they be Amelanchier or red elderberry have such a range.

SB: Do you remember. . . . There are a lot of Habenarias in Andrews now. Has that been pretty much consistent, or are they part of a successional sequence?

AS: I wouldn't say there were a lot of Habenarias in there. I've seen some there, but I'd never say it's a common plant.

SB: There are what, three species?

ML: Yes, three species, and I was getting 100% frequency in some of my sets of ten plots.

SB: The pink one is the common one.

AS: Are you calling it the big pink? Of course, I think they're probably the same thing.

ML: It's that little white one . . .

SB: Now, that's in the shrubs.

AS: Is that clavellata?

SB: Yeah, it's out on the open bald, too.

AS: It is?

SB: Yeah, it's fairly common too. You've got to look through the grass for it.

AS: (unintelligible? Pink?

ML: No, it's a little white one.

AS: Oh, the white one is clavellata.

SB: Yeah, that's pretty commonly distributed.

AS: We used to find it almost always just in the bog with the sundews.

SB: That bog has always been there, has it?

AS: As far as I know.

SB: Do you know if the herders that were with the animals went through there?

AS: No, I've never seen animals on the bog . . . on the bald.

ML: Was it always sit off from the rest of the bald by that rim of Spruce trees as it is now, or could you just . . .? Now, if you're walking by on the trail, you wouldn't know it was there . . . if you were looking.

AS: No. No, I didn't think there was any so-called barrier between the bog and the bald in those early years.

SB: Was there much Angelica on the bald?

AS: Not nearly as much as in recent years. Angelica is much more common there now than it used to be in the old days.

SB: So there's been an increase of herbs of that sort?

AS: Yes, particularly Angelica.

SB: What about the lilies, which of the lilies . . .? There's Lilium superbum. . . . What's the white one? Starshaped, what is it?

ML: Stenanthium?

AS: Well, of course, that occurs there. That's one of the few places that I know, but I've never the lilies to be plentiful. They used to be much more plentiful along the Appalachian Trail between Clingman's and Silers.

ML: On that opened burned area, Mount Buckley, is still very pretty.

AS: The best concentration of lilies in late July.

SB: Well, the hogs have finished off the superbum, but I don't think they've taken the Stenanthium.

AS: That's all?

SB: But they haven't finished it off yet. They've reduced the population substantially.

AS: I remember one time I was leading a hike into that area. We were going into Double Springs Gap, and one of my hikers saw a large moth perched on one of those lilies, and I always carried a knapsack with a cyanide jar. I put this moth in the cyanide jar. Lo and behold, it was the first record of the St. Lawrence Tiger Moth south of the Catskill Mountains. Since then we have had several specimens, all in the time when the lilies were in bloom.

SB: Butterflies (unintelligible).

ML: Did you ever. . . . You've obviously hiked to Silers a lot. Did you ever get to Russell Field?

AS: Not very often. That was sort of out of bounds for us. I don't ever remember scheduling Russell Field as a regular objective. We didn't climb up that high on few occasions. Jennison here collecting plants and so forth, but it was not a frequent objective.

SB: What was that like, say, in 1930?

AS: Well, I have kind of a hazy memory. Not very spectacular.

ML: Did it look really different from the ones which they . . . whose origins they aren't so certain about? It seems to be growing up a lot faster than them, and the species diversity is much greater.

AS: I must say I have not seen Russell Field for years, so I'm not sure I can answer that.

ML: Did it always have that laurel slick down the middle?

AS: I don't know.

ML: Were the rhododendrons at the lower edge of Andrews very impressive in the '30's?

AS: Oh, they were always a good attraction. As I recall, there is a white form of catawbiense. Are you familiar with that?

ML: I didn't notice it.

AS: As I recall, it was not far from the bald in the summer-time. It was white catawbiense. Course, most people would say it was maximum. That's out of maximum range, for one thing, and the leaves are different.

SB: Do you think. . . . Has there been any change in the azalea population on Gregory in recent years? Is it going up, going down, stable?

AS: I don't think that there's much change that I've noticed. Some very tall growing azaleas in that forest.

SB: And a lot of hybrids down there.

AS: Oh yes.

SB: Do you know if that was the original area of the hybrids, actually down off that south edge?

AS: Well, that's what I recall, you know. It's been quite some research done by Little (?), a person who's a horticulturist at Calloway Gardens.

SB: The one who got his thesis eaten by the bear?

AS: That's right. (unintelligible). He was studying the hybrid azaleas on Gregory many years ago. (unintelligible). Have you ever been there when the lovely shell pink ones are blooming?

SB: Oh, I think we must have seen every color possible.

ML: I was up there for six weeks this summer.

SB: Not on the bald but working in that area. We had a pretty good look at that.



AS: Let's see. In the years I was here, of course, the chestnut was going from bad to worse. And chestnuts were still bearing fruit and even (unintelligible) when I arrived, and some of the people like Harvey Broome, who was a president of the Wilderness Society, he told me that he first noticed chestnut dying in the late '20's. And we would . . . In my journal, I remember many notes on blooming and fruiting of chestnut and as the years went by, you had to go higher and higher in the Park in order to get the flowers of the chestnut. So that finally, at the highest levels, and there was some, as I recall, at the margin of Andrews at 5,000 feet. I don't think chestnut gets much higher than that.

ML: We've found a few saplings up there.

SB: Yeah, that would be just about maximum elevation for that.

AS: That's about as high as it got. In fact, that's a maximum level also for trailing arbutus. It's right on the bald, on the bald.

SB: Yeah, that came up in our samples, trailing arbutus.

AS: (unintelligible).

SB: (unintelligible).

AS: And over the years, I remember pointing out the routes that I would lead up Alum Cave and up to Mount LeConte, there was one chestnut under Alum Cave Bluffs. It persisted year after year. But every year less and less leaves and flowers appeared, and finally it stopped.

SB: There's one up right by Newfound Gap Road that's still producing fruit. It's right on the road. I'd say it's an American. Any case . . . Did you ever go over to Mount Sterling Bald?

AS: Yes, although we did not make that as a regular trip.

SB: How about some of the balds that are like Newton Bald, that are called balds? How open were they in those days?

AS: They looked like the picture right there for the most part. That's how I recall Newton Bald.

SB: So they were sort of. . . . The trees right at the center.

AS: The trees were there.

SB: But it was still sort of an open spaced situation. What are some other balds that that would have been true of at that time?

AS: I don't know. There must have been two or three others, small (unintelligible).

SB: What are the names of some of those others--Hyatt?

ML: Hyatt, Nettle Creek.

SB: Mostly on the Carolina side.

AS: Yeah, that's right, on the Carolina side.

SB: So, Newton looked. . . . How big was Newton? Did that go along most of the ridge top?

AS: No, not extensively, as far as I know.

ML: Judging from the size distribution of the trees across it it was not too big. It was probably for just one man's cattle.

Did you ever notice any animals on the balds that were really uncommon elsewhere, that were easy to see?

AS: No, I wouldn't say so. Nothing that would be distinctive.

SB: Do you ever remember seeing any snakes on the balds back then?

AS: Well, I have encountered rattlesnakes on Andrews. Right on the edge of Andrews I killed one of the biggest rattlesnakes, right on the edge of Andrews Bald. And on three or four occasions at Gregory's. In fact, that's a pretty good place for rattlesnakes.

SB: Yes. We discovered that.

AS: I would warn my people. I would warn the people about rattlesnakes on Gregory's when we went there in azalea time.

SB: I had a little exciting encounter with a really bright golden, probably the prettiest rattler I've ever seen. Just gold as gold could be with light brown markings on it, which I almost stepped on as I was picking up my gear near the benchmark. And the funny thing was that people sort of wouldn't believe us when we were talking about that.

AS: Some of the biggest rattlesnakes (unintelligible) the book that I collaborated on with Huheey, some of the biggest rattlesnakes were up in the high altitudes.

SB: So they were fairly common around the bald, just when you first went up there? In '35?

AS: I won't say they were common, but it was not unusual, let us say, that we would encounter a rattlesnake there or had frequent, or had reports, authentic reports. I've seen shed skins, for instance, of rattlesnakes there and not from a snake. One day, I stepped right square on a rattle snake. This was not on a bald, but when I was going from, going to High Rocks. This is before Fontana Lake came into being, and I had following me, was the fellow in charge of type-mapping the Park, Frank Miller. He was the one who was responsible for getting this type map that you may have seen. Coloring the various color codes.

SB, ML: Yeah

AS: He was following me about fifteen feet behind me and going down the manway, Welch Ridge. It was in the fall. We were looking for birds. Going down a rather steep slope, and I wasn't watching where I was putting my foot. I always wore oxfords and long pants, and I stepped right square on this rattlesnake. Well, for a minute I didn't know whether I was bitten or not. I pulled up my pant leg, and I had scratches from briars; we were going through a lot of briars. So I thought, "Well, if don't feel anything in the next three or four minutes, he didn't bite me." It was that close, you know. And, so, he didn't bite me. What I figured out, though, was that when I stepped on him, I rolled his body, and if he struck me, he missed me. Well, Frank Miller, when he came along, he had another person following him. There were three of us, and this third person, I forget his name, he was a forester. He killed the snake, which lacked a half an inch of being four feet long. Well, this fellow was kind of a strange guy. He ate the snake, that is, took it home and ate it. He was one of those Georgia crackers, a queer person. But after that, I always carried a snake bite kit, although I never used it. That was kind of a scary experience, to feel that snake right under your foot, you know.

ML: Was Silers Bald all grassy?

AS: Silers?

ML: Yes, the open part of it.

AS: Yes, as far as I know.

ML: There's very little grass up there now. It's all blackberry and weeds.

AS: Of course, I had close calls other than that with rattlesnakes. I've had, taking people along the trail, I would be walking along, and suddenly somebody back of me, number two or three back of me would say, "Hey! You almost stepped on that



rattlesnake," and there was one right beside the trail. They don't go out of their way to bite you; they just sit there. They're gentlemen. But I've come pretty close. Under those conditions I would kill 'em. You're not supposed to kill anything in the Park, but there comes a time when it's one of those regulations you don't follow.

I was interested in food habits, for one thing, and I've gotten some interesting things out of rattlesnakes. Got one record, it was not my record, a fellow who was running a string of horses over Cataloochee, he got a long-tailed weasel out of a rattlesnake. We would get chipmunks and jumping mice. Chipmunks are probably the most common, which you'd expect. And some other kind of mice, gray squirrel. I think the rattlesnake I killed under Dr. Hesler's feet had a grown, full-grown gray squirrel. It was a big rattlesnake.

Course, some of these things I'm telling you are in these books I've written. No need to tell you anything that you already know. No, I've been a journal keeper ever since I was a young kid. I kept it up with my Park Service career, and I don't see, frankly, how a Park naturalist can function as such without keeping a journal. I'm not bragging. I'm just telling you what the facts are. Have you seen the journal in (unintelligible)?

ML: No.

AS: It's in the library. That was an important part of my activities. In other words, I always had an altimeter with me, and I would check it at known altitude. When I got to Newfound Gap, I'd check that altimeter to see that it was reading 5,000 feet or various things like that, so it would be fairly accurate. So on the day, what altitude things were blooming or where I would see birds and so forth. I had my own shorthand system of notebook, and in the evenings, I would elaborate on that, write up my journal. It's one thing I tell anyone who's interested in natural history: keep a journal.

ML: I get lazy about that.

AS: I know. You don't have to keep it in notebook form. You can file cards if you want. I kept it in a notebook form, and then at the end of the year I would index it. So the thing would be available. But I think it's (unintelligible) to keep a record because your memory is not as good as you think it is. I know. Now that I'm getting older, that's one of the reasons why. I'd like to write another book on the Smokies, on the seasons, but I can't steam up the (unintelligible) to get it down. Because when your memory starts failing, you have a rough time phrasing your sentences. You're trying to think of, let's say (unintelligible), and you have to refer to the dictionary. Well, by the time all that comes around, why, you've lost the train of thought that you had and after all (unintelligible). So that's one of the failings now in my old



age that keeps me from being more valid in black and white that ought to be recorded. I requested that Mr. Hummel, the Superintendent, I had all those journals of all kinds of data, and I felt as though the people should have access to them. So I set at that. I would do a lot more good if we would set up a series of books on the Natural History of the forest instead of me functioning in my capacity. I had already worked 25 years as Park Naturalist, and he thought it was a good idea, fortunately. And then they swung it so I got the same salary under a different title of Biologist. In the case of . . .

(End of Side 1 of tape)

AS: . . . the journals. So, I got acquainted with I. K. Stern and told him how it looked, Mount Kephart in the Park and Kephart Prong, one of the streams in the Park. We ought to have his journals. So he turned them over to me, but it was not a 100% contribution, but he had his strings tied to it whereby if he decided to change his mind, then he could get them back. Well, unfortunately, after he turned the journals over to me, I had them only a few years. He got the idea that Kephart, who had been buried just above Bryson City, near the school, and they've got a big rock monument there. His bones ought to be dug up and planted in the park. He pursued that to such an extent that it wound up in the Director's office, and the Director said, "No. If we started that, the first thing you know, we'd have a cemeteries, you know." So I. K. Stern became quite angry and recalled his journal. Well, after I. K. Stern passed away, the journals somehow got to Western Carolina Teacher's College--that's what it was called in those days. And I again pursued them and I got them back. And I gave a talk one night, worked on the president of the college, and I told him the same thing I had told I. K. Stern, I thought we ought to have those in the Park files, so he turned them over to us. I understand in recent years they've been given to some other college.

SB: I think they've gone back to Western Carolina. As a matter of fact, they sort of made a move a little while ago to take all the park historical collections. That did not sit well with some of us.

AS: Well . . .

SB: I feel that at least that most of the collections ought to stay in the Park.

AS: After the years that I've spent making collections and encouraging authorities to come in and make collections, that they should turn them over to other areas, I thought that was just. . . . Well, I'd better not talk about it, because I can't talk straight.

SB: Well, we need them here. We need more reference collections than just that plant collection. But our main problem now is storage. We don't have any place to put something.

AS: But those things are important, and that's what you base your interpretative program on.

SB: Oh, yes, I know. You don't have to tell me that. We need 'em. It's just one of those things that's sort of disgusting.

AS: As a result of that, the fact that they were given away to those outside agencies, why, anything that I have that I thought valuable that I would ordinarily give to the Park, I wouldn't think of giving it to the Park, because the personnel comes and goes, and some of them don't give a darn about it you know. They'll throw it in a wastebasket as far as that goes, which I think is a real tragedy.

SB: Yeah, that's happened to some of us.

AS: So, I wouldn't give anything to Great Smoky Mountains National Parks simply because of what has already been lost that I thought was valuable.

SB: Well, the archival material is better protected than it was two or three years ago. They had a set of antique pistols stolen, and that woke them up, and they were losing things because they weren't keeping it, the staff, very carefully. And now you have to get special permission to get in the archives and they're cataloging what they've got, finally, and organizing it. It will probably get a lot better. This is the historical documents and just newspaper clippings and, like, photos and things. That it may be somewhat better protected, but I think it's taken a long time and some of the stuff has not just been given away but also just kind of disappeared.

This has nothing to do with grassy balds.

AS: Well, in a way it does have, from this standpoint, kind of indirectly. We had a project here many years ago that a professor from Clemson College came and did work on lumbering in the Park, and he got hold of a lot of maps, and those have disappeared. I think that out, some of the personnel, I won't mention any names, just overlooked that. And these maps and data were gotten from the lumber operators who worked in the Park, you know, back in the old days. Very valuable stuff, but they're gone.

SB: That's one reason for using the management report format and making lots of copies of things. Once you've done the work, if you've got the original data matrix, you should make sure that it gets well scattered around and more than one person has it unless it's for tabulating up things. Like

you're doing a study on (unintelligible) or results that's not a publication. Logging records would be very convenient. There's a lot of interest in doing successional work and setting up permanent plots and that type thing.

AS: That's quite a big function in an article I'm (unintelligible).

SB: I've seen one report. It's a typed report.

AS: This was unpublished. Lambert's work.

SB: Yes, that's the name of it. The one that I've seen as a manuscript. It's a very useful document. We've had, Boyd and I have had a number of discussions recently of where the virgin forest in the Park actually is, and then historically speaking, if it's not, if it's unlogged but been burned and some other things like that. Well, for instance, the status of a lot of the pine forest over on the western end of the Park, just exactly what their exact history is and it's marked on one map as virgin and another map none of that is included. And some of it probably hasn't been logged, but the exact status is very much in question. Thomas Divide, now, is an area of great interest to us because of the proposed Blue Ridge Parkway extension, and I think the upper part of the Divide's virgin, but, again, it depends. The upper slopes are not logged, and I was surprised that it's virgin.

AS: I remember seeing some Norway spruce up on Thomas Ridge years ago. That was back through (unintelligible) . . . actually fire of 1925. There were extensive fires in the Park. That was ten years before my time, but if you go back through the records, you'll find that was the year that Charlie's Bunion burned, Clingman's Doame burned, areas outside the Park, nearby southern Appalachian region burned. That year the rainfall was way under the normal in spite of the fact that October showed eight inches of rain, which was amazing. But, nevertheless, the total for that year, 1925, was way under the normal, and that was the reason things burned. Well, after that fire (unintelligible) particularly the Champion Fiber, planted Norway spruce up on Richland Mountain going down the Sweat Heifer Trail near Charlie's Bunion, down towards Kephart Prong, and I saw that spruce there, and I was very concerned about it. We had a lot of manpower in the Park in all these CCC camps, so I wrote to Dr. Korstian at Duke University. He was one of the eminent foresters in the eastern United States, told him that I was concerned about that particular invader. I was wondering if it would be wise to expend our manpower to eliminate Norway Spruce in the National Park. He said that he didn't think it would reproduce, and therefore it might be just a waste of manpower. So we dropped it, and there's no Norway Spruce.

SB: That wasn't on Thomas Ridge, was it?



AS: There was some on Thomas Ridge. I'm not sure if it was purposely planted there. You know there used to be a cabin just below Indian Gap on the Carolina side called, used to call it "Timbertop Lodge," and it was owned by one of the high officials of Champion Fiber Company, and the Park Service permitted him to maintain that cabin for years after I came, and I have (unintelligible) making trips to spend some time in that cabin, but this man or his people may have just planted some Norway Spruce because it was that company he represented that had the big planting up on Richland.

SB: Would you say that succession has been accelerating on the balds in recent years? That is, that you're losing territory faster than, say, at least the first ten or fifteen years you were here?

AS: I'm not sure I'd say it was accelerating. I'd think it continues, encroachment on the balds is continuing, but whether it's being accelerated faster than it used to be, I'm not sure that I'd say.

SB: Do you notice any differences in the species, say, are in there now, later successional stages against the earlier stages?

AS: Well, we were talking about the Angelica triquinata. That is certainly one that I would immediately call to mind because it'd abundant on Andrews now; it didn't used to be. It was there but certainly not the way it is today, but other than that, I don't know of any species.

SB: What about the shrubs? Are there any present now that just weren't anywhere near the balds in the early days? What about the pines on Gregory, for instance? Do you know when they came in?

AS: No.

SB: Did you ever hear any talk about those balds ever burning? From people who would have known, like the Myers in Cades Cove?

AS: No, no. Way back when Dr. Jennison was still here, Jennison was professor of botany at the University of Tennessee, the Park Service borrowed him, paid him for two years under the CCC program, and he was the one who organized the herbarium, he had a (unintelligible), and they went out and collected plants, that's all they did, collected plants, and Jennison was here in '35 and '36 and seasonally after that for two summers, as I recall, and in that time, he died in 1940, but in that time he brought Frederick Clements in here, and they went to Andrews, and I think that Clements was sold on burning as a possibility. We didn't think it was burning



because fire cherry and others that usually follow a burn were not primary plants. They were very uncommon on the balds. And of course the theory that was published by that North Carolinian, Wells, A. W. Wells . . .

ML: The Indian camp . . .

AS: The Indian. I think it was one the most absurd of the various theories that was ever published. Because if the Indians cleared the balds and shot deer and turkey from the cover of the nearby forest. . . . The Indians were never ambitious enough to do things like that. They didn't want to work. Clearing the bald would mean a lot of work.

ML: They probably didn't need to do that until considerably after the white man came.

AS: No, his reasons were kind of . . . you could shoot holes in his reasons. They didn't hold water. He thought if there was a depression in a big boulder, over there, that was because the Indians ground their grain there. It was just a natural erosion pit. Things of that sort, you know. In other words, he had an idea, and everything which agreed with the idea he brought in, but that which disagreed, he threw it out the window, which is not a scientific way of doing things.

SB: So you don't remember anyone locally, say, talking about actually having burned at all?

AS: No.

SB: And the grazing of course is pretty well documented. . (unintelligible). What do you think about them as, say cleared by settlers, like the idea that Spence Field was completely cut out of beech forest or was a small opening there, and they extended the bald down.

AS: I think that's entirely possible. I think when the white people first came into the Cades Cove area they somehow got to know there was a meadow on top of the ridge, and they drove their cattle up there and over a period of years they slowly enlarged it. That makes sense. But the fact remains that the meadow was there before the white man had anything to do with it. That's what the problem is: What caused it? I don't think it was mankind's meddling except that they did over in later years change the character of the grass, the clearing.

SB: Do you remember Eupatorium rugosum being on the balds at all in the old days or around the edges?

AS: Now, rugosum . . . That's . . .

SB: White snakeroot.

AS: That's always been at high altitudes. It's a very common, fairly common plant. I'm not sure that it was more common or less common back then than it is now.

ML: Is it more common at higher altitudes than at lower altitudes?

AS: I would say so. Definitely.

SB: So that shoots down one theory of . . .

AS: At least that's been my experience. I don't know if that'd generally be the truth.

SB: I think you'll find some of the other people we talked to, there's a great deal of confusion about several of the snake-roots. One theory was that they brought the cattle up on the balds to get them away from the snakeroots which cause milk sickness.

ML: Yeah, but old Uncle Jim Shelton was saying all the milk sickness was lower down and this mineral they were licking up to get milk sick was never on the mountain tops.

AS: Did you interview Jim Shelton. He's a really fine character. I remember going to see and measure the big mountain laurel, he called it ivy, of course, up on above Tremont which Jennison was told about, and Jennison wasn't there, but Jim Shelton was. Before I came, and they measured 82 inches to the diameter of this mountain laurel. Well, of course, it's an aggregate growth. It fuses over the decades, and I remember I had quite a controversy with Jennison. He's a darn good botanist, fine person, good friend of mine, but on one thing we disagreed. "If you get the publicity to the newspapers that mountain laurel get to be 82 inches in diameter," I said, "That's a lie!" It fuses on you. No one stem could do. The biggest stems there were just over a foot in diameter, which is big enough for mountain laurel and over the . . . maybe even centuries, the thing fused over there so it looked as though it may have been one plant, but it certainly wasn't. But we measured it and photographed it, and I remember in later years I made two trips there, both with Jim Shelton, and I remember the second trip there was an awful lot of damage to the trees. What I thought it was a heavy snow had broken all the big red oak stems. Jim Shelton's ivy stalk was what we called it.

Did Jim Shelton ever tell you the story about the time he wrassled with a bear?

ML: No.

AS: That was a true story. I forget the details. I can't tell it the way Jim does. So maybe if you ever see him again, you should ask him to tell you the story where he wrestled a bear. He actually had the bear. I don't think it was a grown bear, but it was a big bear. Course, Jim was, at least he was a big powerful man. He worked for the lumber company.

SB: When do you first remember hogs on the grassy balds, on Gregory and Spence?

AS: My records don't show any beyond '59 or so.

SB: Was the damage really intense that year, or was it . . . ?

AS: It was very noticeable in spots, came right up to the roots of some of these islands of azaleas.

SB: What about Spence Field?

AS: Couldn't answer that because I don't think I've been there since they knew there were hogs on it.

SB: So '59 is the first year that you remember.

AS: It was '59 or '60.

SB: Did you notice what was recovering after that type of damage?

AS: No.

SB: When was the last time you went to Gregory?

AS: I don't know. It might have been ten years. You see, I retired in something like '64. I was, actually I retired at an early age, I was 58 then, because my job was getting too much. . . . I couldn't get outside, and I had already had 31 years in the Park Service, so I decided I'd quit before I got unhappy at being in a beautiful area and not being able to get outside.

SB: Did you ever worry about hiker impact?

AS: We had no problems up to 1960 when I ducked out as a naturalist.

SB: It was pretty free-for-all camping and stuff like that?

AS: Well, you couldn't camp except in designated areas. It was a surprise to me that in later years they permitted them to camp about all over the Park.

SB: You mean the sites or . . .

AS: Well, frankly, I don't know what the regulations were, but I got the impression that they were camping in certain places that in years gone by would never have been permitted them.

SB: But there was no impact really from visitors. Was there much azalea stealing and that type of activity at that time?

AS: Stealing?

SB: Plant poaching, taking shoots off the azaleas or digging up plants by the roots, which is apparently quite a problem.

AS: I don't think it was serious. Of course, there was some of that, I myself have stopped people from getting rhododendrons to take out with them, big balls of earth, put it in the trunk of their car. Back in those days. I wouldn't say that's true now.

SB: You think that's gotten worse, at least the areas that you took people.

AS: Oh, well, I haven't been in the Park frequently enough to know but for instance when we would leave our cars parked at the Alum Cave parking area, we'd go up to Mount LeConte for the night, we would never give it a second thought that anyone would tamper with the cars until, I think, the last year or two I was Park Naturalist. There was a report of somebody stealing something out of a car at the Alum Cave parking lot.

SB: Now that's very common. They have a great deal of difficulty with it.

AS: We never gave that a second thought back in those days.

SB: Were there many local people up around the balds visiting, or did you ever run into people who used to herd up there?

AS: Not very often, once in a while, but not often.

SB: It was mostly . . .

AS: Most of the people were just up there. Although undoubtedly the Hiking Club and so forth, they knew the azaleas would be in bloom in the latter half of June and they would make that ascent.

SB: Well, they're still doing that. They did that last year. Did you ever remember well, rare species or that type of thing that you consider relatively peculiar to the balds or that would be their regular area of distribution in the Park in the past or in the present?



AS: I don't remember any on the balds. I do remember going down to Andrews and in that burned over section half way down, maybe less than half way down to the bald is where I found one specimen of a stalked holly. That is, the fruit was on a little stalk. I forget what species that is. We found that in the burned area to the left of the trail going down. Close to the trail. (unintelligible) found as far as I remember. Maybe I think it's in my book. Of course I remember where choke cherry was found for the first time, not on a bald for the first time (unintelligible).

SB: Prunus virginiana.

AS: Up above Buckeye Nature Trail, on one of those cliffs somewhere.

SB: I think someone at UT was trying to find that.

AS: That's right. Dr. Shanks was the one who spotted it. Years ago. He was an ecologist. That was one of the rarities of the Park. So is the holly. Course, that narrow-leaved gentian, Gentiana linearis that grows in the Sphagnum in pockets here and there on the Alum Cave trail and a few places elsewhere on Mount Le Conte is the one according to Grays Manual, is the one (unintelligible), you know. It doesn't get farther south than West Virginia or thereabout. We're way out south of its range, but the linearis grows up there, apparently with Parnassia.

SB: Do you think the major attraction of the balds are the flowers or the view?

AS: Probably the view, I would say, the fact that you've been in the woods and suddenly you come in to this meadow. It's just like going into Cade's Cove. The charm of Cades Cove is the open characteristic, believe it or not.

SB: Oh, I know that it is. Completely unnatural community.

AS: I believe that's the reason the balds are attractive.

SB: You think people like lawns, even if there are rattlesnakes where they're sitting?

Do you remember much bear activity on the balds?

AS: No. Once in a while you'd find where they'd dig the yellowjackets out, digging along the trails.

SB: You didn't see much evidence of them getting berries or anything?

AS: Oh yes, come to think of it I do remember on Andrews more than once when the bears were feeding on the blueberries and would just wade into the bushes and completely tear 'em up quite a lot feeding.

SB: That's on Andrews?

AS: On Andrews, highbush blueberry.

ML: So those highbush blueberries have been there for quite a while, then.

SB: Do you remember when that was, pretty much?

AS: It was twenty, thirty years ago, or more.

SB: So the peregrines were still in the Park at the time when you were here?

AS: Oh, yeah, quite a lot of them. Now they disappeared long before I left the Park.

SB: They were here while you were here though?

AS: Oh yes.

SB: Where did they hunt? Did they hunt in those open areas along the ridgetops at all?

AS: Well, they must have because. . . . You know if you look at my book there's the bittern, the remains of a bittern were found, a peregrine's nest at Alum Cave Bluff along with a number of large birds, a merganser. Peregrines were taking mergansers at that point, but that was a record that I would certainly believe. Danyon (?) I think, number one ornithologist in Tennessee, I think he was the one who spotted it and recorded it, and in fact, he sent the specimens to Oberhauser in Washington for determination. (unintelligible)

SB: Do you think that those high burned areas were of any importance to birds of prey, the more open areas?

AS: Yeah, that's a great place where they could get flickers and bluejays that fly across there, you know, and birds of that size are right down their alley for a peregrine.

SB: So these burns and balds are good habitat. Maybe more so without the grazing on them, you know.

AS: I'm not sure how you tie in with the balds on that.

SB: Well, just that there are these openings along the ridge so (unintelligible).

AS: I think that the ravens were much more abundant then in years gone by because of the cattle that were on the balds in early years. Sometime something would happen to a cow, much more carrion to feed on, therefore you get ravens concentrated.

SB: Of course you were here after that was all over so you wouldn't have any observations on that.

AS: No.

SB: Apparently, the lightning kills occasionally were large enough to provide rather large amounts of carrion in one block.

ML: Yeah, I heard about some late snow that killed thousands of cattle on Spence.

AS: Yeah, that's right. It . . . old newspaper columns and so forth. Bone Valley was named after that.

ML: Jim Shelton could remember it was on the evening of May 19 and the morning of the twentieth, but he couldn't remember the year.

SB: Have you been going back through the old weather files the old papers to try to find the date of old burns and . . .

AS: I worked on that at the Asheville library for some time, hoping to pin that down, but I was never able to. Going back through kills of cattle by a late snowfall.

SB: We might ask Boney, because if we jog his memory with Jim Shelton's date, he might remember. Shan Davis might, too.

AS: But there . . . I came upon three or four different probably dates as a result of that, and I think it's mentioned in the book called Cabins in the Laurel which is one of the books on the Southern Appalachians highland people, by, was it by Shephard? I think it's mentioned in there. I don't know if that is the authentic date or not, I don't know, but it's mentioned in there. If you find it I'd like to know, but (unintelligible) probably a few dozen killed.

SB: Boney led me to believe they had incredible sheep kills.

End of tape.

Transcribed by Andrea Behrman and Mary Lindsay

Kermit Caughron interviewed by Mary Lindsay at his home in  
Cades Cove, December 16, 1975  
Mrs. Caughron and Rex Caughron also present

KC: Most of the people out of here, the biggest thing they did, see they used that as grazing, and they put up their hay and run their cattle up here in the summertime, and in the wintertime and in the fall of the year the cattle went back, and they wintered them, that was. . . . There weren't many people who had any pasture for milk cows or a team of horses or something like that. They depended on the mountains for their grazing.

ML: They just grew hay down here to keep them for the winter?

KC: Hay, and Cades Cove grew corn, but it wasn't even self-sufficient in cereal. They had to go out and get their. . . . There wasn't even enough corn raised then for their corn bread.

But you can't imagine how much change there's been. Now, North Carolina there was three different lumber companies. They were Kitchen Lumber Company, there was R. E. Woods, and I forgot who the other one was. Cut timber off the far side of the state line. This side over here down this end was never cleared. . . . But I mean there was no timber cut. But up here then on the Little River Lumber Company, they (unintelligible). I was never up in that valley; that was out of my territory up there.

But that land there between the balds, there between Gregory and Parson, why that was the prettiest place that I ever seen. Little short trees all over, all this grass, wasn't any brush or anything like that.

ML: Were there any azaleas up there then?

KC: Uh-huh. . . . Blueberries.

ML: Where were these growing?

KC: On the balds.

ML: Right on top?

KC: Right on top. Just like there is a few up there now.

ML: I wouldn't say there's a few now. There's more blueberries than grass up there now.

KC: Well, there used to be ten or fifteen times as much cleared stuff as there is now. It was cleared way around there, see. . . . Now the timber has come on up. Now, the old timers think that that was. . . . They didn't understand



why those balds were there. They thought it was above timberline, which it's not, because this here brush wouldn't be growin' if it was above timberline.

And if you'll notice all that pine, even back to Rich Gap, we called Gant Lot, they call it Rich Gap, those young pines, there was no pine back in there forty years ago. Now this pine is comin' on up, which is something different. Notice there's no big pine . . . (unintelligible).

I don't know, now that timothy, now. It . . . you suppose the Park sowed that? Or is that due to horses being . . .

RC: Could be horse droppings.

KC: Horse droppin's. . . . It was grass that resembled cheat; it was that little old native grass there. It didn't get as high now as the timothy. (RC says something unintelligible). Well now what . . . When that Russian boar first rooted it up, they went up there and placed it back down. Did they put no seed down:

Now Russell Field was cleared, and they say Sam Sparks cleared it, and he had mowing machines and a barn up there. He put up a little hay (unintelligible). Now, it had red top or timothy. Timothy and red top are herd grasses. (unintelligible). Do you think it'll ever be grazed again?

ML: Well, if they decide to put the money and time into management, I think that will be the . . .

KC: What are you going to do about the black bear?

ML: That's going to be tough, but I think they're going to have to have somebody up there watching.

KC: Well, you're going to have to watch 'em night as well as day. (unintelligible)

ML: I don't know. Couldn't cows, most cows, cattle take care of . . .

KC: They would run 'em into where a tree, two trees went together and catch 'em and kill 'em. Now, they kill 'em at (unintelligible). But they kill those cows. They're not going for calves; they kill cows! If they can hem one, they kill it.

ML: Do you think something like donkeys could take care of themselves better?

KC: (laughing) I don't know if a bear would eat a donkey or not. I wouldn't know about it. There's very few donkeys up there. There's a lot of sheep on those balds, . . . sheep just invites a bear.

ML: Sheep are stupid. So you did have problems with bears?

KC: Uh-huh. See, they'd wipe the cattle out. Ordinarily the cattle had . . . they did kind of a circle, about every two weeks they come back around. They salted 'em in certain places, you see. They called 'em salt licks. They take a hollow tree, or they take a tree that fell down, and they chop out notches in it, you know, and put salt in it. Well, these cattle would graze around and would come back through and get their salt. Well, this old bear come in there, and he just stampeded 'em out, and they just goed from one end of the mountain to the other. You're really goin' to have a problem. I don't know what you'll do.

ML: There are a lot more bears than there were.

KC: Oh my goodness, yes. Used to, when one got in, why we come down here, and we'd get up a crew of hunters, you know, and dogs and go back up there and kill it. There wasn't any open season or closed season. Why, one killed a cow, why, a calf, why, we killed a bear, then had a feast.

ML: About how many animals did they have up there?

KC: Well, they would have from two to five hundred head, each herder, plus the sheep. That year I was up there I had only 220 head. But that was a whole lot of money then 'cause I couldn't get in the CCC for a dollar a day, and I got a dollar and a half a head. And I got a little over three hundred dollars there. (unintelligible)

ML: How many sheep did they have up there?

KC: I imagine, 850 'cause there was Sam Sparks and George Nairn and (unintelligible), he's from down round Maryville.

ML: And you just relied on having the salt up there to keep them from wandering"

KC: Well, I had to, you know, watch it, and if they went too far down in North Carolina, or back down towards (route) 129, I had to drive 'em and there was always some of 'em that would drop off into the Cove, and I'd have to bring 'em back up.

ML: Did you have bells; on them so you could tell . . .

KC: Yes, there was a bunch of bells. Most of them did. Now our personal herd here we had a bell on all of 'em. But most of 'em that brought 'em in from the outside, out near Maryville, why, they'd just have two or three bells in whatever it was they brought, twelve, fifteen. Now, there was, really there was no big herds of cattle because you didn't have the

hay baler, and you didn't have the ensilage, and so on. It was small. Now, they cut tops with a knife, you know, and off the corn and put up a little hay, and everything was done by horses, and you didn't have the capacity that we've got now. One man can do now what fifty did back then.

ML: What road did you follow to take them up to Gregory? Which trail did you use?

KC: We went up Fork Ridge most of the time. That depends on where you wanted to go. Now if you was to go up toward Ekaneetlee or Russell Field, why, you'd go up Forge Creek, believe that's what they call it, to the big poplar, then to the left and out up that way, Ekaneetlee Gap.

ML: And what about if you were going to Parson Bald?

KC: Parson's, you'd go up Fork Ridge. It's not the way the trail goes now. It went up the ridge; now it goes up the creek to where the big poplar is, then it makes a switchback, then goes out on the ridge there. But it used to go all the way up this ridge in a zig-zag, and Spence Field up here, they either went up Bote Mountain or went (unintelligible) to Russell Field where there was a switchback left went to Spence Field. There was two ways of going to Spence Field.

ML: What time of year would you take them up there?

KC: Well, it depended on the spring, now; it was somewhere from the fifteenth of March to the tenth of April. Now, my dad was always went a week into April on account of late snows. Now, back before I was born, in 1910, they had cattle up there in April, and there was a four-foot snow came, and they starved to death all over that mountain.

ML: That was in April?

KC: That was in April.

ML: Someone else told me about a really late snow on May 19th.

KC: I can't remember that. I could. . . . The trees was just now gone in Rich Gap there. There was a drift, and it was up ten feet high where the old herder, he come out, and he chopped it with an axe on snow level, and that's where they said it was, and there was a hack place there on the tree. That was two years before I was born. I always heard it was about the tenth, twelfth of April. I never heard of one in May.

ML: When were you born?

KC: 1912. There was an old man Davis, a part of that lawsuit. There was a lot of friction along in here, and there was a

lawsuit over some hogs, and different ones was claiming them, and he swore to these hogs and said their tails froze off, and I asked him when, and he said the fourth of July. (laughs) But he was one again. Have you read the National Geographic, that issue in 1962?

ML: No.

KC: He was the one who had his casket made before he died and only kept his whiskey in it. He was a character. I don't know if he was native here. . . . His sister married old Nate Sparks, I believe, and he was a Civil War veteran. He was up here (unintelligible) Oliver Cabin. He shared with Shields. He was a kind of inventive mind. He invented the little horse-power threshing machine, built a little dam there and fixed him a power wheel, a water wheel. His wife could churn on it and grind his corn and so on, and he said (unintelligible).

ML: Is that Randolph Shields's father?

KC: No, Jack was Randolph's, Andrew Jackson. It's a different set of Shieldses; Randolph's is old Frederick Shields, it's his great granddad, and Randolph's granddad was Will Shields. Will died in, I don't know. He had something, I don't know what it was, but we had some old doctors here from Turkey, and they called it white swelling. In other words, they split his leg and scraped the bone for some reason. He had an infection of the bone, and he survived, which is amazing, or he would have died. But Randolph's Dad and my mother were first cousins. Randolph, I don't know whether you call it second or third cousin. I don't know how you count, you folks. Seems to me it ought to be second cousin because it's second generation. I don't know what you call it.

ML: It's probably first cousin once removed or something like that. Where did the herders stay on Gregory?

KC: They had a little one room cabin.

ML: Where was this, near Moore Spring?

KC: At one time I guess it was. The first that I used, what they called Burnt Cabin Branch. That was right down from Rich Gap, down there on that branch, and that one got burned, and then the other one was just over on this side, about a half mile down on this side, down in there on the right of the ridge there. You should go up just before it topped out there. It was about then, just under Moore on this side.

ML: Was there any herder's cabin at Sheep Pen Gap that you know of?



KC: I think that Sheep Pen Gap was . . . Yep. Nate Burchfield had one there. Old man Nate tried to gain possession of 5000 acres there, the old Burchfield grant. And there was a spring up there and there was a cabin up there. But they arrested him, and took him out. The Aluminum Company of America bought that from Morton Butler Lumber Company. Of course Nate had no money; he lost the lawsuit. He went back in there and cut some curly cherry and took 'em out to town and (unintelligible).

ML: Did you ever hear any stories about people having cut down a lot of trees around Gregory to make it bigger?

KC: No. Nothing. Only Jim (unintelligible) cut a lookout where you could see out this way was all that. . . . In other words, other than that, I think that's all that was cut. The old timers didn't know if there was. Like I said a minute ago, you know, they thought it was above timberline.

ML: Did you herders cut occasional little trees for fire wood?

KC: Yeah, we cut beech down there. We used to use beech for firewood, but we didn't go up on top to get it. We cut just right around the cabin. And there was one herder tried to grow a vegetable garden up there, but all he could grow there was cabbage and potatoes.

ML: How did you make the fence for the gant lot?

KC: We just cut down trees, call it brush fence from fallen trees. If there wasn't enough trees, why, then they cut poles, made 'em a rail fence.

ML: Did they use the same trees as fences as long as they lasted?

KC: A lot of them, if one went to get holes in it, why, they'd get out here and cut another green tree and fill a hole in there. There were brush fences down in the cove there (unintelligible) start out hacking these pines down, you know. (unintelligible).

ML: So you only had to cut trees for that gant lot every few years? .

KC: Uh-huh. I don't know what they had on the. . . . They called it cattle gathering. There was a roundup on the first Monday in September.

(end of first side of tape)

KC: . . . the Park got established, and our herd got built up to around 150 head of cattle here. Why we would take ours back. That still belonged to Morton Butler Timber Company, and after this cattle roundup, why, we'd take ours back and stay with them for six weeks and let them graze, save a lot of hay down here. We'd pick up chestnuts and squirrel hunt and so on. We had a ball while taking of ours.

ML: That would be in late September?

KC: Uh-huh. Late September and first of October, till we got a hard freeze.

ML: Did you have any cattle get milk sick up there?

KC: We did, and that's something we don't understand. Now that didn't happen until some time late in August. The spring of the year, why, you didn't have any trouble with that. Them cattle got into some of them coves in North Carolina over there, why, they'd get this, they call it, milk sick. If you got up to drive one, why, they'd just start runnin', and he'd just run till he fell, and he'd never get up. I don't know what it was. Some old timers here thought it was probably poison off that copper. There is copper veins over there, and now what it was, I don't know. There is some guy at UT who calls it staggerweed, but I don't go along with him, and my grandmother had an uncle who went to North Georgia, and they have it down there, and there were places down there that they would just grow corn, and it didn't bother the kernel of the corn, but if they cut those tops or pulled those blades off that corn, it would get a cow a milk sick in the winter, and still there's copper, you know, around Copper Hill and Ducktown and so on down there. So I don't know whether it's any . . .

ML: You know, one thing they think causes milk sickness is white snakeroot, which grows up there a lot now.

KC: Well, they grow in north Georgia, too.

Mrs. KC: Would it be the seed off it?

ML: No, the whole plant.

Mrs. KC: Seems like they'd get it in the spring instead of the fall.

ML: Well, it doesn't get really big till late July.

KC: Why, in August, July or August, last of July and first of August.

ML: Did you think if a person drank from milk of a cow . . . that they would die?

KC: Most of the cows that did get it died themselves. Now they would feed them apples or they was constipated and the'd give 'em apples or somethin' or other, tried to get a laxative in 'em. I do know that they were stiff, and they got started running and limbered up, why, they generally went downhill. They didn't go uphill; they'd go downhill and go into a laurel thicket or ivy thicket, so when it went down, that was it. You'd go back the next day, and you couldn't get them up. They stayed raght there. They wouldn't move.

ML: So were the woods around Gregory just those big, widely spaced trees and grass underneath them? How far down the mountain did that sort of forest extend?

KC: Well, now, the Tennessee side you didn't go over very far before you got into the beech and there wasn't much grass there. Now, we had the lamb's tongue and ramps and some fern. But the North Carolina side it was all grassy all down all the ridges, down Twenty Mile Ridge, Long Hungry, and Wolf Ridge, and all them. They were grassy right down the tops.

ML: Did the cattle eat the lamb's tongue and the ramps.

KC: Uh-huh. They'd eat the lamb's tongue. They didn't eat the ramps. The old turkey eats the ramp, but the cattle didn't eat the ramps. Lamb's tongue is almost tasteless. I tasted it; it looked like a ramp, only smaller, but there's no taste to it. They'd pull that stuff and eat it. That was your first grazing there in the spring. (unintelligible)

ML: Did the animals ever eat the azaleas? I guess they didn't have much rhododendron or laurel up there.

KC: Not as much as we've got now because the herders all believed in fire, and those mountains burned about every year, and that's awfully hard on the rhododendron and . . .

ML: Did they burn the actual grassy balds or just the woods?

KC: They didn't know. They didn't care if they burned them.

ML: They set these fires in the spring?

KC: They were set in the fall of the year. They didn't want it in the spring of the year. It would kill their trees and everything when it had the growth on it, but when the trees was dormant, why, the more vegetation there was on the ground, it didn't kill no trees. It'd kill a few sprouts and kill an awful lot of bugs. (unintelligible) . . . you didn't see no dead trees. You didn't know nothin' about your southern Pine beetle and so on back then when they were burning the woods.

ML: Did they burn. . . . Where did they burn? Up on top or just the pine slopes?

KC: They just burn it all.

ML: They just set fire . . .

KC: They just set fire, and then along in the '30's, during the Depression they, the state, started appropriating money, and they got these I don't know what, the foresters, I guess it was, but they would have somebody in here, and he would round up a bunch of men and go fight these fires. They would try and surround them and put them out. We had even more fires then than we did before because that gave the guys some-thing to do, so they'd get out and set those woods on fire so they could go back up there and help put them out, and it burned all the time until the Park got established in (unintelligible). . . . Three or four fires (unintelligible). In fact, I don't believe there's been any in the Cove here now they've been down here now--some guy--some drunk set the Calderwood across to Twenty Mile and they've been some fires over here in Townsend, but there haven't been any fires over here since the Park was established.

Mrs. K.C.: (unintelligible).

KC: Now, they set fire (unintelligible) here one time, but we went up here and told Lampey, was ranger then (unintelligible).

ML: Why did the herders believe in fire?

KC: Well, same thing people do in Florida today. They burn those swamps down there, probably right now settin' those swamps to get a dry day, to get that dead grass really good, you know, and after you've got young grass come soon, you haven't got all that dead stuff mixed in with it and then . . .

Mrs. K.C.: Killed them shrubs.

KC: Kills some of them shrubs. They'll come out you know, and your cattle will eat that too.

ML: And they always burned in the fall?

KC: Uh-huh (unintelligible). The only fire that you would have in the summertime would be lightning strikes somethin' big trees . . .

ML: Did you ever have any animals killed by lightning up there?

KC: Uh-huh. Had five killed at one time (unintelligible). The main state line top of that mountain was awful bad for them to get killed. (unintelligible). This old guy at



Cable Mill down here, he had fifteen head of cattle and killed nine of 'em at one time. He was settin' in there grindin', it was right this side of the waterwheel there was a big spruce pine tree--busted it all to pieces, and he was sittin' there fifteen to twenty feet out of it. (unintelligible)

ML: Were there any trees right on top of the bald?

KC: We had another cleared spot going down, it's called the Wolf Creek that runs down into Twenty Mile, Rye Patch down there. It's about thirty or forty acres cleared there, I think. It's some Gregory, probably Russell Gregory who was killed by, I don't really know who the North Carolina rebel was he was burined up here at the Primitive Baptist Church. Murdered by the North Carolina rebel, now I don't know who the North Carolina rebel was, but it happened during the Civil War.

ML: What did they do at Rye Patch? Did they grow rye?

KC: Most of them grewed some rye. There's a little cabin back over there, about a mile from this Rye Patch. There was about three or four apple trees set out down there, a spring there, big enough for a small garden, whether he had a garden I don't know, but when I knew it, it was just a grassy spot there, a meadow.

ML: Was it the same kind of grass that you had on Gregory?

KC: Uh-huh. It's native.

ML: Were there any serviceberry trees around the edge of Gregory?

KC: Oh, yes, they was all over there. (unintelligible)

ML: But there weren't any growing on top of Gregory?

KC: Not that I know.

ML: Were there any hawthorns?

KC: Now, that's that little old haw that's at Moore Spring with the red berry?

ML: Yes.

KC: The fact is there was just nothin', there was just a grassy meadow. That was all up there. There was no shrubs or anything.

Mrs. KC: There was just your azaleas.

KC: They were right around the treeline. They wasn't no azaleas up on top 'cause it was that grass (unintelligible).

ML: Were there any blackberries growing up there?

KC: There were a few that were there, but they didn't have no briar, no stickers on them. Now why is that, do you know the answer to that?

ML: I think it's just a variety that doesn't have them.

KC: In fact, I never seen berries on them. I saw the briar and there were wild strawberries up there, and someone claimed that they were either white or yellow, not red like them down here. (unintelligible) And there was another old berry up there; it kind of resembled a raspberry, only it grows at an angle, looked like a raspberry.

ML: Did the animals eat any particular plants more than others or did they just eat whatever they came to?

KC: The cattle that went year after year would eat most all those weeds, whereas these cattle go first season up there, they'd more just like to eat the grass. But the ones that grazed there year after year would eat most all those weeds. (unintelligible) And there was a vine, they called the peavine, wild peavine, that was a good fall grazing. (unintelligible) Then there was the wild (unintelligible).

ML: Did they just wander down to Moore Spring or the spring at Sheep Pen Gap when they wanted water?

KC: Even go for a mile or two beyond those springs (unintelligible) 'cause they wasn't afraid to come down from on top (unintelligible). The sheep mostly. . . . That was one reason for puttin' more shrubs on the (unintelligible) Parson's. (unintelligible) They're like the deer; they browse them small shrubs.

ML: Did the sheep wander around in the woods as much as the cows?

KC: No, they stayed more on the top. Up there where those elevation markers are, why, I always took a bunch of salt and those old sheep would just gather around there and fight flies. Of course there wasn't many flies up there.

The last herder's cabin was up there was at Deerlick Gap, that was (unintelligible). John W. Oliver was the last herder up there. And he moved out 'cause there was so many people movin' in there, eat up all the food at the herder cabin at Deerlick Gap there. After two or three years his boys, two of them, was Clay and Winston, and Frank Oliver . . .

End of tape.

Transcribed by Timothy Hyatt and Jennifer Adams.

Interview with Earl McCampbell by Mary Lindsay  
December 16, 1975  
Transcribed by Andrea Behrman and Michael Stein

ML: Did you herd, or did you just walk around up there a lot?

EM: Yes, I've been there. I've built the last . . . I helped build the last gant lot was built up there a little better than 50 years ago, on the Spence Field. And the, the Spence, the field there was bald. The Spence Field was bald, and then there's Thunderhead and there was three tops there. There's Thunderhead. . . . Let's see, Rocky Top, Thunderhead, and Laurel Top. There was three stops on Thunderhead. And two of them was bald, was Laurel Top had laurel grown on it. And they used to graze the cattle there, and they'd kept that all eat around there. It was just bald. There was nothin' there but grass. And well, I don't know . . . there's another bald on down the mountain there between the Spence Field and Gregory's Bald they call Little Bald. Then there's Gregory's Bald . . . I never was very well acquainted with it--I been there but never went there too much. But Little Bald and Thunderhead, why I've been there quite a little bit.

ML: About when were you there?

EM: Well, it's been a . . . well it's, from a, I'd say . . . oh about '15 on up till the Park took it over, after the Park took it over. I been there. I got to go up there last summer a year ago, a the man up at the . . . the school up there at Tremont took me up there in a jeep and I . . . that's the last time I've been up there, but I knowed all about the cabins there and the old cabins that used to be there years ago. They's up there. I tell you this one time about being up there, the old herders bein' up there on the mountain. Thomas Sparks, he was an ole man, and we went up there on Friday. There was an ole cabin up there on, on the range up there. And we went up there the prettiest warm day, you know, in April, and went up there and went to the cabin and stayed all night. Next morning we got out there, and I never saw the sky blue, I don't think, in my life as it was that mornin' . . . just about. He got out there and looked around there above. He says, "Boy," he says, "don't look right." Well, we went off down on the Eagle Creek fishin' stayed down there past 12 o'clock and we started back up there, and went to (unintelligible) along the cabin. Next morning we got up, and there was three, four inches of snow on the ground. Them cattle, they just go crazy, they go to walkin' and bawlin' with all that snow on the ground there. They want to try and round them up, get 'em into a field eat that ivy, mountain folks call it ivy, I think they call it

rhododendron now. It poisons the cattle, you know, when they eat that green (unintelligible).

ML: Yeah.

EM: They went trying to get them away from there. So, by that evening, why, the snow all melted off, and they turned 'em back out a little. They took 'em down there where they had a field, but way down there what they call Russell Field land, they had the fence around it at that time. They run 'em in there in that field, you know, to keep 'em away from that ivy. They had some hay there in the barn fed 'em but them, that old Spence Field now is growed up; you wouldn't hardly know it.

ML: But what was it like when you first saw it?

EM: Well, it's, it's just a bald, I mean a grassy field. That's all, just a field, you know, no, no timber.

ML: No trees on it.

EM: No trees on it, just a . . .

ML: Were there any blueberries or . . .?

EM: No not any (unintelligible). The blueberries up there don't grow like they do down here, they grow on a bush. They grow oh, I've saw 'em a six or eight feet high, the blueberry bushes. They grow like bushes, down here the (unintelligible) don't grow very high you know. But, ah, there was nothing, nothing at all on it. The whole field you know, ah, some-places they'd be a little bunches of laurel, maybe. But a it's pretty, pretty clear, I mean. The . . . run on down in the edge of the field there ah, they graze those cattle in there. There's a wild grass grows up there. It's . . . don't see none of 'em down here, and it's just like a lawn in there, you know. The cattle kept there grazed down, and in that timber around up there was the prettiest place you ever saw, you know, just looked like a lawn, you know, where it kept mowed down. Now then, why that's all closed in, growed up, you know, don't look like the same place. That's a, a, I saw a picture if you get a hold a that. I don't know, they might have that up at the Tremont, Tremont camp, up there, school. They had one up there of girls up on the mountain when I went up there two years ago. She had a picture that field there. A, my uncle drove the first truck that was ever up there, and he drove it up there in the field. They had made his picture there. And she had that up there.

ML: When was that? When did he drive that truck up?



EM: Oh, it's been, it's been more then, oh, around forty years ago, I guess.

ML: Just after the park was started, or just before?

EM: It was after the park took over, but he was working for the park when they took it up there. And a they have that picture up there, they have it. And I went up there ah, two years ago, they had a bunch of these college students working up there, and they had a camp up there, and one of these girls had that picture up there. I told her all about that all I knowed. He was the first one took the truck up there. Now then it's growed up in sarvis bushes till there's no field there it's just . . .

ML: Well, you can still see the field, it's just . . .

EM: Eh, you can still about where its been but then just a, well, it don't look anything like it did then.

ML: What were the woods around it like? Were they just big widely spaced trees with grass underneath?

EM: Yea.

ML: No little trees?

EM: No, trees in just around the edge of the field. Why, the timber grow right up to the edge of the field and then just big grass out of those trees around the field. Then, I can remember about 4 or 5 cabins being there in my lifetime, I tell you. The first one I went to was a ole log cabin there that didn't have any, just, well, it just split everything, ya know and made that, didn't have no lumber at all. Then they move that saw mill up there, down in the cove there, right off from them where they building the house out of lumber and (unintelligible). I don't know much else to tell ya . . .

ML: Well, did they have cattle on Little Bald?

EM: Keep cattle on them?

ML: Little Bald, that place that . . .

EM: Little Bald, yea. They keep all over that mountain everywheres up there. . . .

ML: Well, was Tom Sparks in charge of the ones on Little Bald?

EM: Yea . . . Tom Sparks was the herder there . . . him and oh, there've been several that I know of . . . old man Thomas Sparks and his brother Dave herd part of the time, and then

there's a Jim Lawson who was up there a year or two, and then the Walker brothers, Bob and George Walker ah, was there. They built, George and Bob built a log cabin over there. The one ole log cabin got go down (unintelligible). They moved over there and built a new cabin, and it was there just a few years and it burnt down and so, ah, the ah, the Park's built a shelter cabin right close to where that cabin was at there. You been there, have you, you know where the spring's at then?

ML: Yea.

EM: Well, now the 'ole . . .

Mrs. EM: How 'bout that picture you had . . . is that'n around here? You up thar at that cabin?

ML: Asa Sparks gave me this one.

EM: There's ole man Tom . . . Tom, I knowed him. There's the old original cabin. I don't know what this is here . . .

ML: That's a logging camp.

EM: Logging camp . . . I wonder if that was up there . . . logging camp, 1908, yea that's (unintelligible). Must have been on up there--no, it wasn't on top of the mountain (unintelligible). That's ole man Tom, said he, it didn't look right, he knowed there somethin' in the air, that's snow a-comin' ya know.

ML: Even if it was clear. . . . Yes, did you hear how he died?

EM: Died?

ML: Yea.

EM: He . . .

ML: He got shot . . .

EM: Got shot up there. He got shot at that old cabin place there. That's not the cabin, though, that was there when he got shot.

ML: Who shot him?

EM: Ah, let me see ah, it was Earl Cameron. Yea, there's a--there's another picture of the old cabin.

Mrs. EM: Not as good as the one she got, though.

EM: Ah, he was mistaken, the man that wrote that there--ah, he tell about that being the cabin on that line . . .

ML: Yea, it's a bit on the Carolina side.

EM: Yea, it's over on the Carolina side. Now, if he had in mind that's cabin that was a Derrick, what's called Derrick, on between Thunderhead and Clingman's Dome, it was Derrick cabin they called it. It was on the line but he been, he was mistaken in that cabin as he was he said you read that way he said that's tellin' about in war time they'd scout up there you know 'uns they couldn't out of one state into the other. The law from Tennessee would come up there why they'd go up there to the other end of the cabin (unintelligible) North Carolina, why they'd go to the other end of the cabin.

ML: Was it all pretty open around the Derrick, was it woods?

EM: Derrick Cabin?

ML: Yes.

EM: No, no, it was no fields or nothin' there. It was just -- ah, it was just an open place in the woods, ya know.

ML: Did they run cattle in those woods around there?

EM: Oh, yea, they run cattle in there. Yea, all up and down that mountain. That old man Tom Sparks there, he travelled all up and down them mountains, and one night he was out there and comin' back from Derrick towards Spence Field and there was a panther jumped on him. He had carried a big ole Barlow knife, one of the great big 'uns, you know. He stabbed it with that thing; it was all that saved him. He didn't have no gun nor nothin'. He wasn't afraid; I don't know why. You can shut that off and read that if you want to and see what it says there.

(Pause)

ML: Let's try that again. . . . You said they burned the mountains all around but they never burned the actual field?

EM: Yea, that's it. But the Little River logged on the Tennessee side up there next to the Spence Field. . . . They got a fire in there, and they had one of the awfulest fires you saw in there, ya know. After they cut that timber out, they burned everything up . . . it never did . . . if the field ever burnt, I never did know anything about it. I never did see any sign of it in the field. It burnt up, pretty well up to it there.

ML: Yea, I guess, the animals kept the grass pretty short, did they?

EM: Oh, yea, they, the cattle kept it grazed down short you know, but it was burned right (unintelligible) time--a certain time of the year after it gets green why ya know it wouldn't burn at'all then. There in the wintertime, just certain times it'd burn. It burnt over the field if it ever hit the right time, but I never did know if it ever been burned. Let's see, I used to talk to Charlie Dunn, an uncle of mine who lives up there--have you?

ML: Yea, I tried to talk to him today and he said. . . . He seemed sort of reluctant; he wanted to save it all for his son's dissertation.

EM: He's the man that took that car up there. First one that went to Spence Field. Yea, he's . . .

Mrs. EM: Was it a car or a truck?

EM: Well, it's a pick-up truck (unintelligible). Ole man Jack Fisher, first ever took one up there, well, the mountain there but he lacked about two miles getting to the top. Was an old Cadillac car.

ML: Let's see, do you have any idea how many animals they had up there?

EM: How many what?

ML: How many animals they had up there?

EM: Oh, they different . . . everybody in the country would take their cattle up there you know round in the summer. They'd have six, eight or a thousand head of cattle up there.

ML: That was all the way from Derrick to Little Bald?

EM: Yea. It was ah . . . yea that herder would stay there, you know, and salt 'em and, ah look about 'em, you know, and so on. They run sheep and mules and everything else up there you know, horses.

Mrs. EM: (unintelligible).

EM: How's that?

Mrs. EM: What would he get paid?

EM: Well, it was 75¢ way back then and a dollar per head, you know, for a season. Make seven or eight hundred dollars for the season. And they had ah, I noticed the paper, let's see, was that in Tessy's (?) corner--that was talking about the name of the gant lot? What the gant lot was, you know. And one of 'em said one thing and one another. Yeah, they



go in there in the fall of the year. They had this gatherin', what they call a milk sick. I don't know what it is. Some-thin' they got in the fall of the year and the cattle get sick. They had to give 'em (unintelligible) on account of that. They'd go in there, you know, and everybody had their cattle in there, you know. Everybody had a--had his cattle all marked. They had a undercut or swaller fork in one ear, you know, and every man knowed his mark, and they drove, round them cattle up, everybody go in there to get that cattle, help round them up--round 'em up and bring 'em down there, and put 'em in that gant--that lot. And then every man would get his cattle out of there, you know and drive 'em off the mountain together, you know, his own cattle. That's what they really call a gant lot because they put 'em in there, maybe in there some of 'em be in there two or three days without anything to eat. And they called that gantin' 'em.

ML: Where was the gant lot on Spence?

EM: Well, the ole original one--the first one that I ever saw was there was right out, you know, where you go up into the end of the gap--the gap there going up into the field?

ML: Yea.

EM: It's right out--next to that next knob out there. And the one I helped build was on beyond--well--from the spring there at the cabin the trail goes round level right into that gap around there. Ah, I worked there about two weeks cuttin'.

ML: Did they have a rail fence around it?

EM: Rail fence around it; we cut that timber down, split them rails up and carried them on our shoulder, built that fence around that.

ML: Where did you cut the trees, from just right around there?

EM: Just right around. Close as we get 'em and close as we could find we (unintelligible).

Mrs. EM: How old was you the first time you was up there?

EM: Oh, I wasn't very old--big enough to get up there. I don't guess I was over twelve years old.

ML: How old are you now?

EM: Now, I want you to guess.

ML: I don't know.

EM: I'm older than you think, I guess. I'm 78. Yes, it's been more than 10--ah, 65 years ago at least, first time I was up there. Quite a little change, now and then. They had a--those ah, girls and boys, college students, working up there. They had a tent camp right down, right down towards the Little Bald they called it down there from the Spence Field; it's down towards a dirt cabin, you know down that way about--oh, I guess it's about a mile down there they had the camp down there.

ML: Do you know anything about that sawmill on Eagle Creek?

EM: Oh, not much. I saw it's (unintelligible). Little after (unintelligible) they quit sawin'. See they moved that in there, and they got started a-sawin', and they got into some other man's land, and they got into a lawsuit over the land, and the mill just decayed there. It went down, and they carried it off, and they left the ole bar there till war time, and Park Service drug it out of there and sold it for scrap iron--you know, scrap iron was so short. That's a--they had a two room cabin there--good house there, you know, and they just a--somebody go in there you know, and they tear it all pieces, you know, and burn it to wood and finally they just tore it down, you know. That ole man Thomas Ferguson, he would carry provisions up there. Anybody would come along, he would eat off 'im, you know, and he never did charge 'em a thing. He would just give it to 'em, you know, just give it to them. They never did give him nothin', and they's all the time somebody crossin' back and forth across that mountain, you know eatin' off of 'im. Nobody went there without him givin' 'em somethin' to eat, such as he had.

ML: He must have gotten tired of people sponging off of him all the time?

EM: Yea, I couldn't have done that. No, I couldn't have done that hardly. I wouldn't mind giving them somethin' to eat if they was right hungry, but just make it a habit of it, why. . . . A kid go there, a boy, like wasn't no kid, why he'd look after them, need a bed at all, why, he'd fix them a bed. Last night I spent up there was in that shelter cabin. We rode horses up there. We got up there about oh, about 11 o'clock in the morning, and long about, it was raining then in the middle of the evening. That wind went blowin', you know, and they went coming in there and ah, I never saw such a crowd yet. Well, they couldn't all get in the house; they's some boys come up there that I knowed from over here that was going to lay out there in that rain. It was raining you know, just . . . and that wind blowin'. . . just blowed steady--wasn't no puffs just a steady hard wind--cold you know how cold it get there. . . .

I believe it was 23 stayed in that shelter cabin, couldn't no more get in. I told them boys about a cabin, an ole cabin that was way out the other end of the ole field at there that was still there then. I told 'em they might get dry at there, but they went out there and never did come back. I reckon they got to the shelter. Ah, they'd go up there in the fall of the year and bear hunt, you know. Oh, there'd be maybe whole bunch there bear huntin' in the fall of the year. They'd take their dogs and kill a bear or two.

ML: Did they have an easy time getting them or were they pretty shy?

EM: They was hard to get, they'd have to--there was an old bear hunter knowed 'bout which way they'd run--certain gap that they'd, stand for 'em. Ya know they'd send a man to those stands, and the man would take the dogs and drive, you know. He'd go drive the bear. And they'd get after one, you know, and he'd run over to that man in the stand, and he'd shoot it. That's a way they killed 'em then.

ML: Then what did they do with them, eat them and save the hide or something?

EM: How's that?

ML: What did they do with the bear when they shot it?

EM: Well, they'd eat it. They carried it out of there and eat it, you know. They'd have a regular bear feast there. They'd cook it right there, some of it. Carry it off the mountain then. It's cooked right well--there wouldn't be anybody now who could cook that bear meat make it taste like anything. My mother could really cook, and she knowed just how to--how to cook it. You cooked it with a pot with a lid on it, then, why, you couldn't eat it at all. Taste that strong bear meat taste, you know, and cooked it with lid off, why, that steam and all got out there, and it tasted all together different. I got hold of some--I worked at the plant down there, and we'd cook and eat some in there and I got hold of some bear meat. I took it down there--there's some of them never tasted it, you know, and they were eatin', eat up. And they was gonna cook it, you know. I said--he's a fella that knowed everything anyway, you know--"You don't want to cook that with your lid on your vessel, now, when you cook it," I said (unintelligible) it will too." "Naw, it won't make no difference." Well, he cooked it with the lid on it, tasted it, and it had an animal taste, said it wasn't good at'all. I--my uncle killed one up here, and he come in there and got after his hogs up there, and they got up there and killed it. Mother cooked some of that, and I was driving a mail bus. Had a

colored boy down there at Maryville who helped me get the mail from the post office down to the bus station right back of the post office there, and I--he took that up and I took that down there--some of 'em talk about some never tastin' none--this colored boy, I took some, slashed some pieces off, and I made a sandwich out of it. I took it down there and give it to some of 'em around there, and that colored boy got the mail down there, and he sat down there on that mail, you know, eatin' that sandwich, and he had awful big white eyes anyhow, you know, and he rolled them eyes around a time or two, and he says, "Earl--I tell you," he said, "that the best meat I ever tasted!"



Asa Sparks interviewed by Mary Lindsay, December 16, 1975

ML: Your father was Tom Sparks who herded up on Spence Field, right? Did you go up there very often?

AS: I was up there a whole lot (unintelligible). Sometimes I'd go up and stay a week at a time, help him some.

ML: And what years, about, was he working up there?

AS: Well, it was before '26. He got killed in '26, so it was before that on up till then. That's where he died at the top of the mountain. A boy killed him.

ML: By accident?

AS: No. He was (unintelligible). Yeah, he herded cattle there for years.

ML: Let's see. He was in charge of all the cattle from Spence Place over to Derrick? Is that right?

AS: Well, yeah. The cattle went from all around the county to Spence Place, and he'd take care of 'em for a dollar and a half a head over the season. Take 'em in about the first of May, and we'd gather the cattle the first Monday in September, I guess, and people come at 'em, and . . .

ML: About how many head did he have to take care of?

AS: Well, he'd generally run from about four to six hundred.

ML: And this was over the whole stretch of ridge top that he.. . . Did he have any sheep to look after?

AS: Any sheep? Yeah, he . . . (unintelligible).

ML: A few hundred?

AS: Yeah, he'd have, I guess, maybe two, three hundred head of sheep.

ML: Were there any horses or mules?

AS: Yeah, he'd have, maybe 75 or a hundred head of horses and mules.

ML: People took them up to graze for the whole summer, too?

AS: Yeah. He got two dollars a head for horses, most of 'em. Just how much the sheep was, it wasn't much on a head, maybe twenty cents or something like that.

ML: How did they bring 'em up? On the Bote Mountain Road?

AS: Yeah, they'd drive 'em. Lot of 'em, most of 'em would go up what they called Bote Mountain Road. Some of (unintelligible). They used to try to salt 'em every week, and every two weeks. . . . They'd carry a little salt out, put about 25 pounds of salt on your back, carry it up that hill, it was pretty hard work.

ML: Did the cattle sort of wander around and come back for the salt?

AS: Yeah.

ML: So they got pretty far down in the woods?

AS: Yeah. They (unintelligible).

ML: What about the sheep?

AS: Well, the sheep stayed along the top, pretty well stayed right along the top of the mountain. The top of the mountain was mostly naked, been cleared. No grass was growin' on 'em. I mean no timber along there, but now there's timber growin' up it all (unintelligible).

ML: Did you ever hear anybody say that that place had been cleared?

AS: Yeah, my Granddaddy Sparks had part of it cleared (unintelligible).

ML: About when was that?

AS: Well, I don't know, that was back. . . . Well, he's been, Granddaddy's been dead about 80, 84 or 85 years, something along there. . . . It was back in his day.

ML: And do you know anything about that sawmill down on Eagle Creek? Did they take timber from up there down to that place?

AS: Yeah, yeah. Eagle Creek. They come up from the North Carolina side, come up Eagle Creek, Eagle Creek heads up there (unintelligible). They come up from over there and logged that. I worked in there for the logging company myself. Then came (unintelligible).

ML: But they didn't get right up near the Spence Place?

AS: No, they didn't get on up there, but they got half a mile from the Spence Place.

ML: Did your father have a little cabin up there somewhere?

AS: Yeah, he had a (unintelligible) cabin.

ML: Whereabouts was it?

AS: Well, it was. . . . You ever been up there?

ML: Yeah, I've been up there.

AS: You know where the spring is, down where the cabin is now?

ML: It's down on the North Carolina side, but there. . . . Was that where the new cabin is now?

AS: Yeah, now there's a new cabin there now; I ain't been there since they built it. But the spring is right over to the right, I understand.

ML: It's the spring that's on the end of Spence way from Thunderhead or toward Russell Field.

AS: Yeah, the west end. The Park built a little old shelter, right along there ridge that's there now. The spring is right between it and where my Daddy's cabin was. I haven't been there in 25 years. They built that cabin (unintelligible)

ML: What were the woods around the field like? Did they have many little trees in them or any underbrush at all?

AS: Well, there was all sizes, of course, the timber along on top of the mountain didn't grow too tall (unintelligible).

Lot of people up there. I was at a meetin' on time. There was a preacher, preacher there. Preacher McCampbell preached there from Dry Valley. He was a Methodist preacher, he wanted to hold service up there. Lot of the men on Eagle Creek, lot of people, they found out he was comin', they come from every camp (unintelligible).

ML: Did you have any problems with bears or panthers getting any of the livestock?

AS: Yeah, them bears kill the cattle and kill the sheep pretty bad. When bears get to killing sheep, why, we would get at 'em with dogs. Probably each time we'd get one killed a calf's killed, why, do the same way, get at it. Kill 'em, killed several of 'em.

ML: Did the individual owners pick out their herds before driving them down?

AS: Yeah, yeah, they had a lot, what they called the "Gant Lot," corral, you might call it, where they put the cattle in, you know, and they'd sort 'em out. Everyone get their own cattle, but they'd separate them right there before they started over the mountain with 'em.

ML: Where was this lot?

AS: Well, it was around from a cabin, just a little around. . . On the trail that goes towards the Russell Place, right in that little gap on the left there, where this kind of low gap there. It was right in there.

ML: Did you build a fence around it?

AS: Yeah.

ML: What kind of a fence? Brush fence?

AS: Rail fence. Cut timber there and made rails.

ML: Did that fence last a few years, or did you have to build it every year?

AS: Huh?

ML: Did that fence last several years?

AS: Yeah, it lasted several years.

ML: Did you cut down trees for firewood and so forth?

AS: Yeah, yeah.

ML: Did they ever burn the place to make the grass better or any reason like that?

AS: Well, some people would fire it, but Daddy always tried to keep the fire down pretty well. But it was. . . . Each time the wood burnt off, that would make the range better next summer; pasture would be better for the cattle after it was burnt off a while. Whenever it was burned off, why, wild peavine would come up, grow in there and touch-me-not, beggar lice and stuff the cattle liked, and (unintelligible) . . . good for the cattle, and it kept the briars down, too.

ML: So you didn't have much briar up there?

AS: Right (unintelligible).

ML: There's a lot up there now. Were there any blueberries growing up there?

AS: Yeah.



ML: Were they right on top or around the edges more?

AS: Yeah, they was pretty well on top.

ML: Were there a lot of them?

AS: Well, there wasn't too many of 'em. They wasn't so . . . You take . . . Now, there around Spence Place, you go up on Thunderhead, them big bushes was called huckleberry bushes. Them bushes up there about the size of a small peach tree. Those have berries on 'em. I never did see any over there; I don't think I ever seen any like that. I went up there one weekend with my cousin, went up there when we was just kids. We had some calves on the mountain. We went to the mountain to stay over the weekend. We had to go on Thunderhead to see our calves. We had shepherds with us; my Daddy had one, and Uncle Dave had one. The two of 'em was with us boys. There was a bear there. That bear was up in one of them huckleberry trees, and he was gettin' berries. We saw that bear, and, boy, we headed back to that cabin, down that mountain we went when we saw that bear.

ML: Did the cows ever get milk sick up there?

AS: Yeah.

ML: About what time of year did this usually happen?

AS: Well, in the fall, 'long about the last of August, first of September. It was according to the weather. If it was dry weather, they got milk sick real easy. Why, if it rained, they didn't get it.

ML: Did you have any idea what caused it?

AS: Well, no, not much. I found a place up there the summer Daddy got killed, it come a storm, killed a bunch of sheep up there, killed, I believe, 26 head of sheep up there, in the old field. Killed some cattle along Thunderhead, couple of mules, killed some stock up and down that mountain along Gregory Bald. (unintelligible).

ML: Was this a lightning storm?

AS: Lightning. Yeah, lightning killed 'em. And after that storm was over, day or two, I was in there on the head of Eagle Creek. I went right down, pretty well straight down from Spence Place, nearly straight down the mountain from Spence Place, maybe a little east just a little, where cattle would go and get milk sick. I had to go up there and finish up the herd, me and my brother-in-law after my Daddy got killed. I found some dirt round where it looked like

they just fell, fresh dirt on the leaves, you know. That was in August, it might have been July, I don't know. I begin to wonder where that dirt come from. I got to lookin' around, and I found where the lightning struck a big sugar tree, run down that tree, run off. I guess it run in the roots down in the ground, the lightning had, and hit something that exploded in there. All around was a hole knee deep or deeper in where it blowed out, throwed dirt out. That's where that dirt was comin' from. Like dynamite bein' buried in there, something was explosive there, and there was dirt scattered all around there. I told my brother-in-law about it. Told him first time he was in there to go by where to find that tree where the lightning had struck. He said, he had a byword (unintelligible) "You told that tale. I thought it was big enough 'bout the lightnin' gettin' that tree and blowin' the dirt around, blowin' out them holes." Said, "You didn't told it by half, did you, now?"

We didn't know what caused it. We kind of thought maybe that was where the milk sickness was a-comin' from was right in that section there where we got milk sickness.

ML: Were there any rhododendrons or laurels growing around there?

AS: Any what?

ML: Rhododendrons? Laurels?

AS: No, not that I knowed of.

ML: They've all come in since then. What about service berries"

AS: Sarvises?

ML: Yeah.

AS: Oh, yeah, there was sarvises scattered about. (unintelligible)

ML: Were there a lot around Spence Place?

AS: No, there wasn't too many right close around, but you could find them. You didn't have to go too far off. They tell me now there's sarvis bushes all over that whole field.

ML: Yeah, ther's oaks and ashes and birches, everything.

AS: Back then the grass was kept close. The sheep kept it clipped down just as pretty and smooth, green through the summer. It was . . .

ML: Like a big lawn?

AS: Like a big lawn, yeah. They kept it real short. Now it's briars and birches and everything. Wild hogs is tearing it up.

ML: Did the cattle eat any particular plants more than others, or did they just eat whatever they came to?

AS: Well, yeah, they, I don't know. They eat (unintelligible). Sheep fed on the top, mostly and wouldn't get off too far. The cattle would take off (unintelligible). I've got some pictures that was made back when they was loggin'. (unintelligible)

ML: Did your father ever stay up there for the winter?

AS: No, we come off in the winter. Keep hogs, though. We'd keep hogs in there in the winter. They did pretty well. (unintelligible) Back then there used to be a lot of chestnuts.

ML: Did you gather a lot of those in the fall?

AS: Yeah. Let me go in there and get those picrures to show you.

(pause)

ML: Did people bring up young cattle to gain weight over the summer or older ones?

AS: Well, they used. . . . Any age, they bring all ages, bring all ages up.

ML: And would a young cow gain a lot of weight up there?

AS: Yeah. They'd gain pretty good up there. They grow good; they grew better than they do here on pastures.

ML: Was that grass up there really good for 'em?

AS: Yeah, they got, they got everything, I reckon, that they needed, maybe, more than they get from off the pasture. But they'd get fat up there on the ridge.

ML: Did the animals get water by just walking down to the spring?

AS: Yeah, well, I don't know, about gettin' down, waterin' down to the spring?

ML: Well, where did they get water?

AS: Oh, the water. Well, there's branches in the hollers, water would be in off from the top a little ways, and they'd go down there and get water. And they (unintelligible).

ML: Even the sheep would go down?

AS: Yeah, they'd go downhill till they found water. They didn't have to go too far to find water.

ML: Did your father have a little vegetable garden up there or anything?

AS: Yeah, he had a little garden, had taters and tomatoes. Taters grew awful well up there, grew real fine taters. Tomatoes done well there, cucumbers and cabbage. A little bit cool for corn. (unintelligible)

ML: Did you ever hear any stories about any really late spring snowstorms that killed a lot of cattle?

AS: Yeah, I've been up there when it had been a snow. I helped get 'em out of the snow a few times. Way back when I was a kid, there come a snow up there, I think first of May, killed a lot of cattle. I was just a kid, I think, when that happened.

ML: When was that? About 1910 or so?

AS: Well, that was maybe 19 and 4, maybe 5 (unintelligible). Now, I've got a cousin out here in Maryville, Howard Sparks, I guess he might tell you what year that was, but he was a little older than I am. He's about seven years older than me

ML: How old are you?

AS: How old am I?

ML: Yeah.

AS: I'm '77. Just a boy. No, I'm getting a little agey.

ML: Was Howard a logger?

AS: Yeah, he was a logger. Hauled lumber, everything sawmills. When I got big enough to do much, they had that country pretty well logged out when I got big enough. But still they went to work in on Eagle Creek, North Carolina side, and I was (unintelligible) loggin' camp.

ML: Do you know anything about the people who grazed their cattle farther east, like at Andrews and Silers?



AS: No, not much.

ML: They were from the North Carolina side as far as you know?

AS: Well, yeah, most of 'em. (unintelligible) But now they did log in there on the Tennessee side. Townsend logged in there as well as the Shay Brothers way back before my day. I remember the Shays logged in there when I was just a kid and (unintelligible).

I wish the Park would not let that mountain grow up. I wish they'd keep it grazed off or something, keep it pretty.

ML: I think they're going to try to do that to a couple of places, but it's going to be difficult and expensive. My job is to give them some idea of what might be the best way to do it, but you've got to cut a lot of stuff down, and then you've got to keep it from sprouting, and you'll have to have animals to chew up the sprouts.

AS: Yeah, they'll have to start grazing it again to keep it down.

ML: They'll probably do Gregory and Andrews. Spence Place is just too big.

AS: Now, I understand Granddaddy Sparks kept a man up there (unintelligible) and Granny Sparks's brother, I think he stayed there for 16 years straight, a-herdin' for my Granddaddy Sparks at Spence Place.

ML: How many herders were there up there? One person at a time?

AS: Yeah.

ML: How many years did one particular person stay up there?

AS: Well, I don't know. My Daddy stayed there nearly, for several years. I don't know how many years he did stay there. Now Gregory Bald, they herded down there for. . . . That was about nine miles from Spence Place, they'd herd down there. And there'd be somebody down at the Russell Place. Used to be there'd be somebody out on above the Spence Place at what they call the Hall Cabin. But for the last several years then, when my Daddy herded up there, wouldn't be nobody herdin' up there. He'd have that range in his.

ML: Whereabouts was that cabin? Above Hazel Creek?

AS: The Hall Cabin was right up the mountain from the Spence Place, right on past Thunderhead, six or seven miles from Spence Place. (unintelligible)

ML: Did anybody in particular own that land, or was it just there for whoever . . .?

AS: Well, they. . . . Now, my Daddy used to own Spence Place. He sold it to John Martin, before the Park bought it. He owned that there. I don't know how much he did own that Spence Place and a little down Eagle Creek, down on head of Eagle Creek. Montvale Lumber Company owned that and a lot of that in there. I don't know whether they owned it, whether they held it for sale, but they logged it.

ML: How did your father get to own it?

AS: Well, I don't know hardly how Granddaddy Sparks owned it, and I don't know whether he bought it or (unintelligible).

ML: I heard that they grew hay on the Russell Place. Is that true?

AS: They, well, there wasn't ever much hay put up there. They put up a little hay down there at the Russell Place. That other kind of grass was the wrong kind, wasn't much good for hay. Wasn't much good. Just that wild grass that grew along the top. Wasn't no good hay.

ML: Were there many weeds growing up there besides the grass?

AS: No, not many weeds. I reckon the stock kept the weeds eat out.

Transcribed by Timothy Hyatt and Mary Lindsay

Mr. J. B. Waters, Sr. interviewed at his home in  
Sevierville, Tennessee by Mary Lindsay,  
January 15, 1976

JW: I was born over near Maryville in Blount County, six miles east of Maryville at the mouth of Ellejoy Creek where it flows into the Little River.

ML: And that was about 90 years ago?

JW: I was born the fourteenth day of February, eighteen hundred and eighty-four. Be 92 years old the fourteenth day of next month if I make it.

ML: Doesn't look as if there's any reason why you shouldn't.

JW: Well, I feel well, I just don't get around as fast as I used to.

ML: Let's see . . . your knowledge about this area comes from reading about it, hearing about it, or . . .

JW. Both. My father was a schoolteacher and the youngest graduate of the University of Tennessee when it was located at Knoxville. He was born on April 15, 1850...

(Note: I was unable to explain to Mr. Waters exactly what I was interested in, and he did not start talking about grassy balds and grazing until 1 3/4 hours after we started. The material up to this point has not been transcribed because of its great length and limited relevance to grassy balds.

Mr. Waters told how his father, John Mullendorf Waters, was born in very poor conditions, was raised by slaves and relatives, educated himself, beginning when he was three years old, until he could go to school,<sup>and</sup> became an outstanding student at Maryville College and a successful teacher who wrote many textbooks.

Mr. Waters also mentioned the explorations of his ancestor, Col. Samuel Wear, DuPont Springs,<sup>and</sup> the setting of the old Indian Boundary.

He said his father helped build the Spence Cabin in 1859, but wasn't precise about whether the area had been cleared by then. He implied that the Indians dried hides there and spent much time there. M.L.)

(Transcript resumes about half way through the fourth side of the tape)  
ML: Do you know when they started running cattle up on Spence Field?

JW: I've been there with cattle when I was just a boy. That was the range up there; that's what it was for, where you herded cattle. And when I . . . The Indians that's where they divided the buffalo and big game and stuff, and that's why they called it the Spence Field. They had a big field there, and they built a corral around it, a big fifteen or twenty acre corral around it. And they gathered their cattle in there and put it in a lot over here and a lot over there and they'd go south. Our cattle all went to Smoky Mountains on this side the fifteenth day of April and then



they went back to get 'em on the fifteenth day of September. And my father took his cattle up there often.

ML: Did Tom Sparks look after them for you?

JW: The Sparkses looked after them . . . Now we had the Sparkses were herders, and the Burchfields were herders, and John Jeffers was ours from down here, that lived down here. But they all stayed up there and camped up there. When my father would go, up there to take his cattle in the spring, he had to go up there and help his herdman locate 'em in certain territories, and they stayed at Spence's cabin. They come back to there and they took their meat and their food, and they took supplies. Then it took him about ten days to go back to get 'em and bring 'em off the mountain, and they corraled them in Spence's cabin campground. So it was called Spence's cabin campground for cattle. Now all this fool stuff about Spence's Field is a field is that it was never natural. But as far back as we know how and the early history of it, 200 years ago it was a great place for chestnuts and food, and it's a natural and big chestnut trees there, and to get the chestnuts they'd burn the leaves, and my father, when he went back to bring the cattle, he always brought back a bushel or two bushels of chestnuts, and fruits and apples that he had picked up up there. So they claimed they burned it off but what--the leaves that fell off of the chestnut trees on the ground, and they couldn't see the

chestnuts, so if they'd burn it they'd have to rake around and be careful that it didn't get out on the mountain, and that would kill the . . . and the cattle left their manure and offal and made it rich, and they come up there because it was free of flies, and a good level place, and they'd come from both sides of the mountain and get on top, and it was quite a level spot up over on there, and it had natural food for cattle. It had mountain--what's it called?--bluegrass, pea vines, and they'd get fat. So the cattle would come to the mountains in the summer time to get away from the flies and the heat and get free food. So that's good shepherds, they knowed how to take care of theirselves. And the cattle knowed how to take care of theirselves. So they'd come to the mountains and the bears went to the top of the mountain to get (inaudible). In the winter time when it was cold, they'd go back down in the valleys. You take my cattle that I've got on some fields over here, and they're down now in the low places in the hollers. In the summertime though, they sleep right on top of the hills; in the wintertime they go down where the wind don't get 'em, and they don't freeze to death there. That's when they herded cattle, that's what they called taking . . .

ML: Were they herding cattle up there when your father helped build the first Spence cabin up there?

JW: They was doing that over 200 years ago. And he went

back there a-hunting when he was nine years old with the Indians, deer hunting and bear hunting and wild turkey hunting and they had coyotes and bobcats and panthers back there. He saw a panther himself back in there and shot it once. And they was there first. And they was there when the good Lord fixed it.

ML: Was Spence Field always a field or did someone clear it out of the woods?

JW: (heatedly) Spence Field was a hunting happy ground for the Indians! They hunted wildlife and wild animals, and wild snakes and beasts. (Several minutes omitted)

ML: About how many cattle did your father take up to Spence Field?

JW: Well, some folks would take a hundred. We had about . . . I remember one time we took ten horses and thirty head of cattle.

ML: Do you know about how many people would take their herds up there?

JW: Well, if you start down here at the lower end of the county, I could name 'em. Dr. Sharp took a hundred (inaudible) Davis took about thirty, John Jeffers had about fifty, and John Sharp had about thirty, and the Davises and MacHughs would start at the lower end, just below Sevierville down here, and it took a day if you started early in the morning,

and they'd pass our house about nine o'clock, and we'd turn our 25 or 30 into the drove. And I saw 300 at one time come down to my home. And they got down to the Little River, they had so many then it would take four days or they'd (inaudible) five miles long, you'd have the little ones in one herd, the big ones in another, and you didn't drive them all together. They had to stop of a night and feed them. They'd stop at our house for a while because we had a creek there and let 'em drink water for about. . . . They'd be giving out for water. They just had certain places they'd let 'em have water, and then they'd camp there that night and feed the cattle and rest and let their horses rest, and the cattle lay down to rest. They took three days to get to the top of the mountain with cattle. They'd come down to our place and about five miles from there then they stopped for dinner and fed the cattle hay and gave them a little rest to give 'em water. Then they drove. . . . You could drive about sixteen miles a day. Like going west, when the settlers went west, well, they always had their covered wagons and two or three mules, and they had their provisions. They had ham, meat, sugar and coffee that they took with them, and they had their kettles and cans to cook. They had to stop for dinner and supper and breakfast. Well, we had to help our daddy. Us boys, we'd go with him for about ten or twelve miles, and then he took his saddle horse and his driving dog, and we went back home because we got into what was called the narrow (?) road and we went down



from the field where it turned off and (unintelligible) mules and cattle, shipped 'em south. And I've had as high as 250 and 30 horses over my farms, herd them, put 'em on grass and clover, grazed them. You never took many horses to the mountains because they'd get wild. But you took goats, sheep, cattle, horses and mules. All livestock, workstock and beef stock, they'd go up there because we didn't have the pasture down here. In the wintertime we took hay and we'd go back, have to go up and get 'em in the wintertime, and we'd have to put up corn and hay to feed for them and keep them down here. We bought 'em down here end of September and tried to carry 'em through the winter and raise them young calves and then send them back in the summertime. Thet's what made the . .

(end of tape)

Continuing the conversation after the tape ran out. Mr. Waters made the following points:

Many cattle and horses died on the mountain. Bears ate young calves, and his father always carried a gun to kill bears and snakes. Lightning also killed a few animals, although large numbers were most often killed when they were standing along a wire fence that was struck by lightning.

At Spence Field was a cooking place where they had big wash kettles. At roundup time fifteen or twenty people would go up there. One of them would contribute an animal which would be barbecued and eaten by the whole party. The herder

who stayed up there to look after the animals would have bacon, ham, and lard which he took up with him. He would milk his own cows and make corn bread. Every two weeks or so, he would go down for supplies.

Fewer cattle were ranged around Little Bald than around Spence Field. Spence Field had the best range. It was also a hunting and camping ground for herdsmen. Mr. Waters' father helped build the original Spence Cabin up there as a boy in about 1850. The very first cabin was built up there in 1775.

Transcribed by Mary Lindsay

Seymour Calhoun interviewed in Bryson City, North Carolina  
by Mary Lindsay, January 28, 1976. Granville Calhoun  
present and contributed a few remarks

ML: Now, let's see, could you tell who you are and how old you are?

SC: You have to tell your age? (laughs)

ML: Yes, you have to tell.

SC: Seymour Calhoun, age 79 last September the sixteenth.

ML: I see, and, let's see, you grew up on Hazel Creek?

SC: Right, I grew up and stayed there some fifty odd years.

ML: How old's your father now? He must be over a hundred.

SC: Yeah, he was a hundred years old the fourteenth of last March. So he was raised on Hazel Creek too, in there, from the time he was. . . . Grandfather moved in there when he was four years born, lived there for years up till 1940. Let's see, he come out about '46, I guess, when the TVA taken all the property over.

ML: Let's see, and your father ran cattle up on the mountain, didn't he?

SC: Yes'm. Yeah, they, well we run several head of cattle of our own, and also we herded cattle for other people too at the same time.

ML: Whereabouts did you herd them? Let me see if this (tape recorder) is working. Okay, let's see. About how many cattle did you herd altogether?

SC: Well anywhere from . . . I guess when there's several at one time, anywhere from five to seven or eight hundred head.

ML: Whereabouts was this?

SC: That's from Clingman's Dome. We had the mountain leased from Clingman's Dome to about, let's see, there'd be four and six, ten; six, six, twelve, about sixteen miles of the mountain was in our range for herding. That's west down toward, you know on Spence Place, that's out from Cades Cove.

ML: So you had where the Spence Field left off over to Clingman's Dome.

SC: Now, and another, there's other folks from Tennessee started at our, about half way between Spence Place and what we call Hall's cabin, that was where the line was and they ranged on down the mountain, plumb on down to Spence Place, Russell Field, and on towards Gregory Bald and down in there to the end of the mountain.

ML: Where was the Hall Cabin? Was that at the head of Hazel Creek?

SC: Head of . . . No, it was, ah, Hazel Creek goes to the right (east), and Hazel Creek heads out at Clingman's, at Siler Meaders. The waters on Siler Meaders, four miles out from Clingman's Dome is the headwaters of Hazel Creek, and the Hall's cabin is back to, back the other way, and it was on the waters of Bone Valley Creek that comes in and goes, Hazel Creek goes this way, and Bone Valley back to the left.

ML: Let's see. So you herded cattle on Silers Meadows? Did you ever go to Andrews Bald?

SC: No, I never was right out on Andrews Bald. I been out there at Siler Meaders, but just going out, right out on Andrews Bald, I never. Now, my father there, he might, he was in there, and then he operated, opened up, a copper mine at Siler Meaders, was up there. Will it interfere with that to ask him this question?

ML: No.

SC: Papa, how long was you there at Siler Meaders opening up the mines?

GC: Huh?

SC: How long did you work up at Siler Meaders opening up the mines?

GC: Two, two years.

SC: About two years.

ML: When was that?

SC: See, what year was that? 1903 or 4, wasn't it?

GC: Yeah, I guess . . . (unintelligible).

SC: Somewhere on in there. And then of course he was in there on up till they herded cattle, and he was on the mountain in there, and up till the Ritter Lumber Company and they come in there in 19 and, they come in 19 and 9; and so



we quit in 19 and 10 or 11. We quit ranging cattle on account of that timber. The railroad was in there then, cutting timber, and the cattle got scattered. We couldn't do nothing with 'em. We just quit then at that time.

GC: (unintelligible)

SC: Yeah, I know it, I thought you was in there about a year, between a year and two years on the mining there.

Now this Hall's cabin, we'll go back to that, was, ah, it was on the waters of Bone Valley. The water, the spring there, I mean, one spring on the North Carolina side come down on the Bone Valley side, that's on the North Carolina side, and the spring for the cabin, a little spring right next the top of the hill, it's on the Tennessee side. That was their cabin, was there, was for hunting and ranging, cattle rangin' and hunters, and they had a club there and went every year for their bear hunting in there for years. Appalachian Hunting and Fishing Club owned the cabin, or owned the rights in there to hunt every fall of the year. But the Sparkses, now the Sparkses, they ranged their cattle that was started down there, they ranged down around there to Spence Field and all down in there was belonged to the, they called that belonged to the Sparkses, they had that leased from, well, I don't know there's one side of the mountain was belonged, was owned. All the timber rights and land nearly belonged to the Townsend Lumber Company on the Tennessee side, and on the North Carolina side was the, was Ritter Lumber Company and the Montvale Lumber Company owned most of that side. But Papa had a lease on this, up on his part he had a lease for 99 years with the Tennessee, with the Townsend Lumber Company to range cattle.

ML: Did someone stay up there to look after them?

SC: No, not regularly, go about, well, tried to get up there at least once every two weeks.

ML: And you salted them and . . .?

SC: Um-hunh. I salted them, got 'em . . . Now they ranged 'em from March, about the fifteenth of March or the first of April until the fifteenth of September was. . . Course they called that gatherin' in their cattle and everybody that had cattle on the mountain come there and gathered them up and separated them, and each feller got his cattle that belonged to him.

ML: Did you build any sort of a pen to put them in?

SC: We had a, oh, there's eight to ten acres in a big, there's a lot where they put them in. They just put 'em in

there when, in separating the cattle out, just had some lots that each man put his cattle in there, just until he'd get it out, and get them out of the way. They didn't, but they just had a big field in there when we'd go to put 'em up, just eight or ten acres, maybe more.

ML: Whereabouts was this? Near the cabin?

SC: Right up at the cabin. The cabin set right in the middle of it, and the cattle . . . this field was, I mean was, the cabin was in the field and it was fenced off in there. And then now in the summertime, we never let the cattle in there. They kept that there, we kept the cattle out until they gathered them up. And then when they didn't gather them, that left the grass, you see, was in there, and that took care of the cattle for a night, overnight or two nights or whatever they spent in there without having to feed them.

ML: Were the cattle belled? Did they have bells on them?

SC: Oh, yes, they had bells on them. You could hear them bells. My grandfather had about, why I think he had about a hundred bells. Ah, the cattle is, well it just, when they'd get out, go together with all sizes bells from that long to great big ones, you could hear all kinds and all tones of bells. They used bells and marking in the ear; they didn't brand their cattle. They tried that a little while, but that was too, they didn't like it on account of in branding them a hot brand, you know, it would burn them up. A lot of them, it caused them to get inflamed, and they quit that. Just used their marks. They had one secret mark in the ear. You put it in a tattoo, just like, you know, just like a tattoo, and they tattooed the name, the initial in your cattle's ear there, and if you got into a dispute as to who, whose cattle it was, you could go and look in his ear there and find out about it, whether it was yours or somebody else's.

ML: Did they run any particular breed up there, or did people just have . . .?

SC: No all kinds. Didn't have no particular kind. Oh, maybe one feller would bring up a, he'd maybe have some particular brand or kind, but they didn't keep them separated when they got up there, they was just all together, all kinds of them, from the little calves on up.

ML: Did anyone have any sheep up there?

SC: No, we didn't on our end of the mountain. Now Tom Sparks at the Spence Place, they had sheep there, a lot of sheep, and hogs.

ML: What about horses and mules?

SC: Well, there wasn't very many up there. Sometimes after the, in the summer after they'd finally get their crops laid in, maybe some of the natives would take their mules and horses up there and turn them on the mountain for a month or two just along late fall, but none ranged much. But, ah, they, going back to the sheep there, I know that there was an old man that was there at Spence Place, and it come up a thunderstorm, right heavy thunderstorm on the mountain, and he went back under to get out of the rain, he went back under this rock cliff, and the lightning hit. The sheep was down below him, and they all kind of huddled up, and the lightning hit them and killed 79 of them. He told me about it, and he said he was a-watching it. He was under that rock, had got back there out of the rain, you know. He said that this lightning, said that, ah, when it's heavy lightning looked like it, looked just like that, and every sheep just went down like that, and there was 79 of them.

ML: That's a lot of sheep to lose.

SC: All at one stroke, anyway.

ML: Did any animals ever get milk sick up there?

SC: No, there was not no milk sick up that far. There was one patch of milk sick down on Hazel Creek; that was way down, oh, not very far up on the creek. There was just a little patch in one little section, maybe as big as a block here or something that had a little milk sick, but there was none up on the mountain where they ranged their cattle.

ML: What did they think caused it?

SC: Well, it's a mineral, I suppose, it's a mineral substance. At least it's cattle, where they're sick, they just, they go there and lick it just like they would where salt's been poured out, and it's, you never find it on the south side, it's on the north in dark coves. And you, it won't, you clear it up if it's, where it's at, if you clear the ground up, you get shed of the milk sick thing, you can go and it does away with it. It has to have shady ground.

ML: Did any animals ever get eaten by bears or panthers?

SC: Ah, cattle, once in a while. Not many back in them days. Once in a while a bear'd catch a hog, cattle very seldom. Of course there was at that time the chestnuts. The woods just a, well, you could rake, I went and just raked chestnuts up like that where they'd fallen, and the bear at that time never, you very seldom ever heard of a



bear ever a-killing cattle. Maybe it would, might be a calf or a hog or something. But it was very unusual in them days for the bear until about the time when they left down there, the bear began to come in there and kill the cattle. I know at my grandmother's old place, my brother lived there, we had to take our cattle out on account of the bears killin' them around the house.

ML: I guess the chestnut was pretty dead then.

SC: Oh yes, they was dead, practically all of them.

ML: Did anyone ever set fires up there?

SC: Once in a while you'd get a fire out but very seldom, 'cause people that knowed about settin' fire out . . . now they'd accuse a hunter of settin' fire out. Now that's a, is something that if a man's a hunter he'll never let the fire go out if he could help it. The only fire that gets out is a man goin' off and thinkin' maybe his fire was out or somethin'. But just go out and intentionally set it, that they don't do it, 'cause if you go and burn it off, burn it off, there ain't no more, there ain't no more huntin' in there for the next several years.

ML: So you didn't burn the leaves off to find the chestnuts or anything?

SC: No, there wasn't no use to. You could just rake them up. They just raked 'em up where the ground would be steep and they'd roll down. Why, I'd go out and you'd just rake 'em up like that, handfuls of 'em, go out and pick of a day and pick up all you could carry out of a night.

ML: Were there any highbush blueberries up on Silers Meadows?

SC: Oh, yeah, there was blueberries up there.

ML: Were they all around the edges of the woods or on top?

SC: Well, they was more or less on . . . you might say they were scattered out from the side, not too many on top but just under the top around on these higher hills you got the blueberries. Then we had a berry, we called 'em buckberries, I don't know where . . . they was on a tall branch like this and they'd get as big as the end of your thumb. They was right deep and had a curve just like a deer's eye, you know, sort of, and they called 'em buckberries on account of it. And the little blueberry, it only comes up about this (knee) high and they don't get any higher than that, but these buckberries, they'd get a great bush, oh, maybe that high.



And then we had the gooseberry; it was about the same as the, I mean it grewed up in tall bushes.

ML: And otherwise Silers Meadows was all grass?

SC: I suppose it is now. Of course it is now, but back then it wasn't. Back when they ranged cattle and for years afterwards it was just a field that had been cleared up. It was called Silers Meadows on account of old man Siler back before the Civil War went in there and was clearing it all, cleared acres and acres up there. He was planning on making a horse ranch out of it. He's from Macon County over here, the old man was, and that's on account of the whole top of the mountain was cleared up there.

ML: Now there's not much grass left; it's all big patches of briars and daisy like things.

SC: Oh yeah, it went just quick as the cattle got took off it, went to growing up then. I guess cattle helped to keep it down, you know, 'cause the grass would grow if the cattle wasn't in there; the grass would grow that high all over that mountain in there.

ML: How short did the cattle keep it?

SC: Oh, they, it was cut all lengths as far as that goes. Maybe you'd have one almost to the ground, anybe another bunch here, it all depended on how many cattle there was and how hongry they was. (To GC) 'Bout how close did the cattle keep the grass bit down in the Smoky Mountain, and I was saying it was all lengths from close to the ground to knee high. Just depended on where it was and how the cattle would range.

They'd vary. At some places the cattle would stay in and not hardly ever move out, and then other places, they'd move from and go back and forth and the others was like a home barnyard maybe. They had certain places on this mountain along them balds that they'd just stay up there more or less all the time.

ML: Did they ever eat rhododendrons?

SC: Well, yes once in a while they would in the spring of the year. Get poisoned.

ML: That would poison them.

SC: Oh, yeah, rhododendron would poison 'em. Yeah, I've had to fool with him, I know what that. . . . Do you know what kind of medicine it takes for 'em?

ML: No.

SD: Well, you can take. . . . Take the fattest old meat that you can get, just . . . where its old, like they, you know people used to have it around the meat house and get right old and . . . just take it and when they're poisoned, cut a piece off and churn it in their mouth and give 'em, and they'd chew that meat up. Then watch out because as quick as that meat hit their stomach, they'd go to vomiting, and they'd just vomit every bit of that poison out, and that was. . . . If you had to give to 'em a second time, you might as well just go off and leave him because he'd get over it just as quick as he'd vomit that poison up. Yeah, I've had to cut off many a piece of fat meat in there and kill the cattle.

ML: What were the woods around Silers like?

GC: (unintelligible)

SC: Oh, yeah, he says they had the old man from Tennessee that brought up a hundred cattle, he was a big farmer and raised a lot of hogs, and he just brung up, bring great big sides of meat, just bring a hundred pounds or so up with his cattle just in case one of them did get poisoned.

ML: Did you ever have any get caught in a late snow in the spring?

SC: Yes. One time I tell you, you know they call it the big freeze. They froze to death nearly all of them on the mountain.

SL: When was this?

SC (to GC): When was them cattle. . . . What year was it the cattle all froze to death nearly on the mountain. Was that eighteen hundred and up in the 1890's or something along in there, wasn't it?

GC: Yeah . . . (unintelligible).

SC: Cause it was back in 18 and 80 or I mean 1890 or somewhere in there.

GC: (unintelligible)

SC: Yeah, I know. He said the cattle run off the mountain when it got this weather or blizzard come, and they run down into. . . . We called head of the creeks to get out of that, and they eat this laurel or rhododendron, we called it laurel you know, rhododendron at that time, and that snow was in there and they eat that, as many of them got poisoned and froze to death too in there. There's several, I don't know lot of them in the mountain. Hundreds of head of them froze to death and got poisoned but the snow stayed, as you know,

and they couldn't eat and they eat this poison, and it helped, of course, kill a lot of 'em. Well, that and the cold weather too just about broke all of them.

ML: What were the woods up there like? Were they. . . . Did they have many seedlings or sprouts underneath.

SC: Oh, yeah, they was just woods.

GC: (unintelligible)

SC: Yeah, I know it. He's telling how come Bone Valley named. It was on account of cattle freezing to death, and there was so many bones left in there after, and it was called Balley Creek up till then, then they called it Bone Valley. But going back to the woods. Why the woods then, they was just native timber. It was in there and never been cut nor nothing, just like the good Lord made it.

ML: So the cattle didn't keep sprouts from coming up or anything?

SC: Oh, they kept a lot of it, but that just helped it. If it didn't . . . If they didn't keep it eat up the first thing you know you just had a big briar patch in the and get that, all that young growth would come up, just make a thicket, and it wouldn't be nothing for the cattle. They'd have to go back, get off the grass and go to just eating the limbs. So that just kept, made the good grazing where the cattle kept eating it.

ML: So it was all, mostly grass under the woods?

SC: Uh-huh. It'd be grass underneath. You see, the big timber at that time was never been cut, and the big trees was high trees, and under it was just little old sprouts and things just like come up there on the hill now. 'Cause that timber in there all along that creek in there, Ritter Lumber Company cut it out in there. Trees in there four and five and six foot over. They cut some at a mill there, we cut some boards that was 54 inches after the tree was squared down. Poplar, that was poplar. That's a great big tree, after you square it down, 54 inches.

ML: Did you ever go to Spence Field while Tom Sparks was herding up there?

SC: Yeah, I was there. You see, we lived down there, just down on the creek down there, just four miles from the Spence Place down on Hazel Creek side in there. We was just down there. When I was a boy just coming up, the cattle, they drove 'em up and made big cattle drives, and they'd go up

by our place and out and by the Spence Place going towards Knoxville and I'd commonly see sheep, cattle, hogs. They'd drive up there and across the mountain. And we lived about. . . down from the Spence Place about three, let's see, three, about five miles from the Spence Place down to our home.

ML: Did people from this side of the mountain sell their cattle in Knoxville?

SC: No, not much. The Tennessee cattle now, up on Hazel Creek, up there on Hazel Creek was where they bought the cattle. I mean they bring 'em there, and most of the time these Tennessee fellers would come and herders and want to buy cattle, would come up there because they gathered the cattle and had the weighing scales there, and they bought 'em by weight. They'd weigh 'em there and then drive 'em across the mountain, but if they just bought 'em by the head, then of course they'd just buy 'em in the lots up on the mountain. But when they come down here they was . . . . Everybody that bought cattle knowed in September when they'd be there, and they come up wantin' to buy cattle, they come to where they kept 'em there above . . . on the head of Hazel Creek. That's down from . . .

ML: Did you have a big roundup when all the owners came up and picked out their cattle?

SC: Oh, yes. You had to get all the cattle in together, and then each man came and got his cattle, and that's when we spoke about the tattooin' in his ear or his mark. Each man had a mark, had their ears marked. And they, you see, and the cattle would get together and they'd have half a dozen people that'd have cattle in there then just run 'em all together and then each . . . in the lots where you'd have to separate 'em out then.

ML: What did the Spence Place look like when you were up there?

SC: Oh, it just looked like a big farm. It was all cleared off and just looked like a big grass farm like you'd have a big meader or a farm. It was all around there.

ML: No briars or trees or . . .

SC: Oh, there was nothing but a few trees back--I mean few. . . . Of course you had oak trees, some oak trees, and then your chestnut trees was scattered around, beech and stuff like that, but the main place then was just like a farm. It was all cleared up. It was nothing on it, just grass land, back till you get back a certain. . . . Well, it was just like you had a farm, if you had a farm in the wilderness.



This here up to where you'd cut it out was . . . and of course timber started there then.

ML: Did you ever hear any stories about anybody cutting--clearing that place off?

SC: No, I don't know as I ever did. I might have, but. . . . Of course it had been cleared in times gone by, I guess, but I might have heard it said about it because we lived in there, and you know how when you come up and live 50 years in a place you don't pay much attention to it when you're used to it every day. (To GC) Wanted to know about Spence Place, whether it was cleared or who cleared it. (To ML) It was there before the Civil War.

GC: It was a long time before the war.

SC: Yeah, now right on down the mountain what they called the Russell Place that was six miles on down below Spence Field going west and it was cleared up. It was just about like Spence Field or bigger in there, and it was cleared up. I think the Russells or somethin' out of Tennessee had herded cattle up there, and they had their popular cabins, and it was called the Russell Place on account of they had their cabins or home, maybe lived there at that time.

GC: They moved (unintelligible).

SC: I thought the Russells moved in there and lived there.

GC: Yeah (unintelligible) good place .

SC: And then farther of course the next place. . . . You go on down the mountain was called the Gregory Bald. That's going way on down like goin' from Fontana Village and goin' up out thataway. That was gettin' down to what we called the foot of the mountain there.

ML: Did you charge people a dollar a head or something for looking after their cattle?

SC: Dollar. Well, I believe a dollar was about the minimum price. It might have been a little more than that, but most of them was a dollar.

ML: And they provided their own salt, or did you?

SC: No, we had to. We bought the salt and took care of them for a dollar a head. But you see, you take three or four hundred head in there and back them days there was no work back on that creek in there, you know. Oh, there might have been a little which you could take, and if a feller

could make three or four hundred dollars through the summer months, for about two or three months there, he had a pretty good living, you know, and salt you know, didn't cost practically nothing, 25, 30 cents, 50 cents a hundred at the most. And they didn't put rock salt out like they do now, they just had loose salt. And you cut a tree down and cut you a hole cut in the tree, and then just go out and pour that salt, cut it where the cattle could get to it, up, so the cattle couldn't tromp, and then just pour them holes full of salt in there, and if the cattle wasn't there when you was a-saltin', if they wasn't around there, you could just pour that salt in there and they'd come. After they stayed there just a few times, you could go callin', and maybe you wouldn't know--hear 'em or nothing where one was at hardly, and you'd go to callin' them directly you'd hear the bells beginnin' to ring then, and maybe late in the evening--and it would take them some time, possibly all night nearly, to get 'em to come back out, but they'd all drift back there to that salt, we called 'em salt logs.

ML: How did you call them?

SC: Su caaaaalf! (laughs).

ML: Doesn't work indoors, does it?

SC: Or holler just any way. When they knew you was there, that's was about all you had to do because they knowed it was saltin' time, and they, you never did get as much salt as they needed of course.

ML: Did you take advantage of that opportunity to count them and see if they were missing:

GC: (unintelligible).

SC: Yeah. There was no use countin' 'em much 'cause you couldn't count 'em because you might--The gang that would be in this holler with this salt today, and maybe they'd start on top of the mountain and run the next day, and the next day they'd be way down there; and if you did, you'd be a-countin' the same cattle over and over. And the only count you did was when you gathered them in in September, tenth to fifteenth of September, and then you counted them up to see where you lost any or what went with 'em. And they didn't lose very. . . . Very few, wasn't many cattle lost unless lightning or something like that would hit 'em some time and maybe kill several of 'em along there right on top of Smoky Mountain you'd get like one time there in the spring right when they first brought 'em up there, they come a blizzard that froze a few to death, not the main one that froze so many of 'em, but this. . . . Drove 'em out there, and they

was not coming up that mountain from the Tennessee side. My Uncle was a-drivin' them, and he drove 'em, and they come along and hit that mountain, and it started this here blizzard, and they just froze on the . . . except now them that run off, a lot of them when he seen that it was a-freezin' and it was going to freeze everything to death, he just tried to, he just scared 'em and run 'em off, let 'em go off, you know, in the head of the creeks. Well, they never froze, it was just along the top of Smoky Mountain was the ones that froze. They got down, when they got a little ways, they got down out of that storm you see, and it was warm . . . I mean down in the heads of the creeks where they was out of the frozen wind.

(Pause)

You take the government claims on this, about these trails and on . . . that that country up in there was not never logged nor nothin', you know, was I don't know what all. And right where they claimed it never been timbered, never been cut nor nothin' like that, I've rode boxcars out--on top of them--out of there when the railroad was up there, be on top of a boxcar with the train, brakin' the cars comin' out where they claimed the timber had never been cut.

ML: Is there any uncut timber on this side of the mountain?

SC: Oh yeah. There's acres and acres, hundreds of acres of it that was never cut. Because they got up in there and through the war, it was World War I, they was in there and there was lot of it. Timber got high, and they was getting a good. . . . Loggin' companies was runnin' into, get a lot out of 'em, and they went and left a lot of the acreage back that they never did go back and cut it. There's hundreds of acres in there that wasn't cut, but a lot of them where they claimed it hadn't been cut had been, because I was raised on it and was up on them creeks and like I said, I'd rode boxcars down out of the top of 'em over there, log trains. You take. . . . The biggest part though of the timber that's up here never been cut is up here on Deep Creek in this section. Down there where it was at, there'd be, oh maybe several acres on the head of one creek, you'd go up one week and they hadn't been up there, and maybe that creek would have a good stand of timber that hadn't been cut. Maybe you'd go over the hill on the other creek right on the other side of it, and it would all be cut out, and it wasn't nothin' in big acreage, you might say. Only right along next to the top of the mountain on the far--on the Bone Valley Side in there, there was quite a little bit never been cut because they never did go back in there and cut it.

End of tape

George Monteith interviewed by Mary Lindsay  
Bryson City, North Carolina, January 28, 1976

GM: About all I could tell you is that . . . we'd go to the mountains every week and see about the cattle and . . .

ML: Well, how many cattle did you have up there?

GM: There's a hundred and ninety-two.

ML: Whereabouts were they?

GM: Up Silers Meaders. Up on head of Forney.

ML: When. . . . When did you take them up there?

GM: We . . . the company took them up, you know, had them took up in, long first of . . . I guess it's in last of April.

ML: And they left them up there till . . .

GM: Left 'em up there the whole summer. We'd bring 'em back in the fall.

ML: These belonged to a lumber company?

GM: Yes. Norwood Lumber Company. We had to salt 'em once every week.

ML: Did they ever get milk sick or anything?

GM: No, never did get milk sick. Sometimes a bear killed one.

ML: Did you go out and kill the bear after that?

GM: Oh, we'd run it off. We never did get to kill it. They caught it in a trap a time or two. Yeah, we caught the. . . . They'd kill the bear, or somebody would, you know. It'd kill the cattle.

ML: And did you ever get any struck by lightning?

GM: Huh?

ML: Did you ever get any struck by lightning?

GM: No. But there's plenty of lightning played all around there in them trees. Yes, there's one place up there that lightning struck a tree about every time it; . . . it thundered. Every tree up there was lightning struck from top to bottom. In Mule Lot Gap.



ML: Did the lumber company just have cattle up there?

GM: Yeah, they just had cattle. See, they had a sawmill at mouth of Forney, and they got their logs up in there too. you see, where we was herdin' cattle. We'd ride the train up of Monday and come back of Thursday every time. We'd stay up there so many nights a week with 'em, with the cattle. It'd take us about that time to get to see all of 'em. We'd see 'em once a week, you know, salt 'em. And I'd fish of the evening.

ML: What did the lumber company do with their cattle?

GM: They killed 'em theirselves.

ML: Oh, to feed the loggers?

GM: Uh-huh, to feed the loggers.

ML: Did you ever run into anybody else herding up there?

GM: Oh yeah. We'd see lots of people that had cattle up there. Granville Calhoun off of Hazel Creek, you know that bunch from down in there, had cattle up there. They kept their 'uns up Hall Cabin, but they come back up to Silers Meaders too. And about everybody around here, down there at Forney had cattle up there. The Coles and Monteiths, we had some ourselves belonged to us out there, you know. Monteiths and the Coles kept cattle and Hyatts. There's several people kept cattle up there.

ML: Was there any one herder whom people paid to look after their cattle, or did they just let them wander?

GM: They just let them wander around.

ML: And they took salt . . .?

GM: Norwood Company's the only one that paid us. We'd get paid for, and Daddy did, for lookin' after their cattle.

ML: Other people'd just come up . . .

GM: And other people come there.

ML: And have 'em salt every few weeks?

GM: And give their cattle salt and go on back home. But they didn't get no pay for that, but we did. Course it wasn't much.

ML: Did you ever get any killed by a late snow in the spring or anything?

GM: Ah, no, not cattle. Now back in my dad's time, sheep froze to death down there, but I didn't know nothin' about that, you know, just what he told me. Sheep'd freeze to death down there in the spring of the year.

ML: Did they take sheep up on the mountain?

GM: Yeah, they'd take 'em up. Up so far, then they wouldn't take 'em out where the cattle was. But there's lots of 'em got killed there, froze to death. I've heard them talk about it, but I didn't know anything 'bout that myself, you know, 'cause there wasn't no sheep out there when I went in.

ML: What did Silers Meadow look like when you were herding up there?

GM: Well, it was just a big field.

ML: Were there any briars growing?

GM: There was briars and grass and what we call 'em, honeysuckle bushes. They call 'em something else now, but we called 'em honeysuckle bushes. Yeah, there's plenty of blackberries and, and right smart of strawberries. I'd pick strawberries on there and eat 'em when we was there.

ML: Were there any big tall blueberry bushes?

GM: Yeah.

ML: Were they right out in the open or more . . .?

GM: It was right around the field on each side. Yeah, I picked a water bucket full and fetched 'em home. Put 'em in the freezer then, see, you could put 'em in the freezer back after I, long, well, it's been four or five years ago.

ML: And did you ever have any problems with your cattle eating rhododendron or stuff that poisoned them?

GM: Do you mean get poisoned? Ah, no, we never lost any that way, but if they got hold of a wild cherry, it'd kill 'em. Whether they's a-cuttin' timber--but ones cuttin' timber wouldn't let the cattle come down where they was at. It'd kill 'em if they ate that there wild cherry bark, I mean leaves after it wilted. We never did have no trouble out in the mountains with the cattle. They didn't die out there from diseases like they did in the settlement. Too healthy, I reckon.

ML: Well, did a lot of them die if they were kept down low?

GM: Yeah. You see, a lot of cattle would die down in the settlement. I don't know what they had. They'd just die. They would never say anything about it.

ML: Did you ever hear anyone tell about anybody cutting down the trees on Silers or . . .?

GM: No, nothing on, just firewood. We've all cut wood down for firewood, you know, to keep fire overnight. Now, there wasn't no timber up there fit to cut. They's just little old beeches. I guess you been back in the mountains, ain't you? They's just the beech trees, you know, and they don't grow high. But we cut beeches all over the place for firewood, dead 'uns. Couldn't cut, since the Park took over, can't cut no green 'uns. Have to have everything dead. (pause) There's wild hogs in the mountains, too.

ML: Yeah, tearing it up. Were the woods underneath, underneath the trees, was it all grassy?

GM: Well, there's grass and then young bushes come up from under it, too, you know.

ML: Did the cattle eat any of those?

GM: They'd eat the leaves when they'd need it, but there's plenty of grass for 'em to eat without eatin' leaves. 'Cause that what the mountain was covered up in, grass.

ML: Did you ever go to Andrews Bald?

GM: Yeah, but we didn't have no cattle there.

ML: Did anyone have cattle there?

GM: If they did, I didn't know of it. If they did, they had it from Noland, back up there. I don't know nothin' about Noland back up where they kept their cattle. They didn't come up on our end. See, we lived at Forney's Creek, and everybody down in there would put their cattle up there, and Hazel Creek put their 'uns in there too, you know. See, they had Hazel Creek and Forney joined together. And the rest of them don't join. So, them two creeks, cattle run everywhere. Horses, too.

ML: Were there any trees on Andrews when you first saw it?

GM: Yeah.

ML: What kind?

GM: They's little beeches and stuff like that, you know, like there was at Siler Meaders.

ML: Were they all around?

GM: They was all around the field.

ML: But not any out in the middle of the field?

GM: Yeah, there was a few scattered in here and yonder. Yeah, there was a few scattered just out in the field. And they are yet. And a few of them there rhododiniums or what you call laurels--I call red laurel. There's some of them out in the middle of the field, or was when I was up there.

ML: Did anyone ever have a cabin up there?

GM: Yeah. A company had a dance hall there. But I can't tell you much about it 'cause we never went there for the dances. But they did, they had a log cabin built there purpose to have dances in it, you know. Course the company eat there too, you know, when they was up there. They'd, somebody cooked up there when they had dances.

ML: Did they bring women up from the valley for those dances?

GM: They'd come from everywhere for the dances. You see, they could ride up on the train on about mile and a half from the top, and they'd walk the rest of the way.

ML: That's funny. That's the last thing I would have expected.

GM: No, it's sort of funny, they had a dance hall way back there, but they did. It stayed there till the Park tore it up, I reckon.

ML: No. I think somebody said something about a tree falling on it or something like that.

GM: Well, the trees might have fell on it. See, there's one up here at, they had a, some man owned property up there before you get up to Deal's Gap, I mean Soco Gap. I reckon it's Soco.

ML: Indian Gap?

GM: It's right up there close to the Indian Gap under the hill. There used to be somebody who owned that, and the Park went and burned it up. Some man had it there when he was workin' there at the lumber company. (Referring to puppy in room). Well, that's a case.

ML: He must think my fingers are good to eat.



GM: Its teeth are sharp. Now, I guess that's all I could tell you about it. Course, we killed lots of rattlesnakes comin' in and out, you know, when we'd walk.

ML: Now, how high up would you find rattlesnakes?

GM: Well, about a mile to the top. Bout a mile to the top of the mountain. Then I found, killed one right in the Gap, at the Double Springs Gap. He'd curled up in there. I never thought a snake bein' there, you know. I was up and looked down, and there it was, layin' there, and I took a big rock and throwed it right on it and killed it. That's the first I'd ever seen there, and he was just crossin' over from Tennessee to North Carolina, one way or the other. I don't know which way he was goin', but he didn't get to go.

ML: Let's see. . . . And you grew up on Forney Creek?

GM: Forneys Creek and around Bushnell. Was born in Bushnell. That's a straight mile down below Forney. And was on Forney the rest of the time till we moved up here.

ML: 'Bout when were you born?

GM: Eighteen and ninety-nine. You can guess how old I am there.

ML: Did you ever see any panthers up there?

GM: Never seen a panther in my life. Not on the mountains. Seen wildcats, foxes, bears, deers. There's a few deers way back too, you know, and plenty of 'em now.

End of interview

Transcribed by Andrea Behrman

Lawrence Crisp interviewed by Mary Lindsay,  
January 28, 1976. Bryson City, North Carolina

LC: That was about herdin' the cattle up there.

ML: Yeah. Okay, so you grew up on Forney Creek?

LC: That's right.

ML: 'Bout when were you born?

LC: Born?

ML: Yeah.

LC: Oh, I wasn't born at Forney Creek. I was born down over here at what they call (unintelligible) at Patterson's Springs, and it's covered up with Fontana water now, as far as I know. Oh, I was born in 1891.

ML: Okay, so, did your family run cattle up on the mountain?

LC: Yeah, yeah. We herded cattle up on the head of Forney Creek there.

ML: 'Bout how many did you have?

LC: Well, we never would, never did have very many. We had three and four most of the time.

ML: Did a lot of other families have them up there, too?

LC: Yep. All of them.

ML: How many do you think there'd be all together.

LC: Countin' up in there all the people that ever lived up there, on the . . . I'd say it'd be, I guess there'd be some-  
thin' like a hundred on, on Forneys Creek, somethin' like that.

ML: And did they have one place for the herder to look after them, or did people just take care of their own herd?

LC: No, they just drive 'em up there and leave 'em and then go back about every two weeks and salt 'em. Nobody stayed with 'em. Of course the other people, whenever we might go and salt 'em, salt 'em this week what was our'n and around with 'em, then maybe two or three days from now there'd be somebody else in there. And it'd be like that all the time long. Maybe it'd be a week before there'd be anybody in there. Everybody had cattle up there would go look about them, 'bout every two weeks and see their 'uns.

ML: Did the cattle, did you call the cattle to the salt, or did they just find it?

LC: No, we'd know wherever we found 'em, you know, why, we'd call 'em up, and put down a little salt for 'em. That's the way we'd do it.

ML: How did you call them?

LC: Well, we would call 'em once in a while.

Mrs. LC: How did you call 'em?

LC: We'd call 'em like: Sooooo calf! Sooooo calf, like that. And they'd go, some of 'em would go to the boys, them that had bells on, you'd hear 'em and they'd come up to us sometimes. And we was off a little distance; we didn't go down to 'em wherever they was at. That's the way that was.

ML: Did they ever wander up on Silers Meadows and Andrews?

LC: Oh yeah.

ML: Or Andrews Bald?

LC: Yeah, yeah. They would go up there once in a great while, but they wouldn't stay up there, though. No, we didn't take 'em up there. When we take 'em out, we take 'em towards the heads of them creeks and places, leave 'em in them coves because the grass and weeds and stuff all like that would come up down in them coves before it come up there on the mountain.

ML: Did anyone specifically herd cattle on Andrews?

LC: No. You mean stay up with 'em and watch 'em?

ML: Yeah.

LC: No.

ML: Well, did any people take their cattle up there and leave 'em?

LC: Andrews Bald? No, they hardly ever took 'em up there to Andrews Bald. They meant to leave 'em down below, and then they would probably go up to Andrews Bald and the same to Silers Meadows once in a great while. But they didn't stay up there at all, the cattle didn't. They didn't stay up there. They would stay down in the coves, places like that, heads of creeks and branches.

ML: There were generally not many animals on Andrews then?

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LC: Animals?

ML: Well, livestock.

LC: No, no. They wasn't, they wasn't any cattle much on top of the mountain, along the tops. None of the time on the tops of those leadin' ridges that run off from the main top of the Smokies. They didn't stay up on top of the Smokies much 'cause there wasn't much up there for them to eat. Well, there was some grass, but now winter grass, down in below Silers Meaders in there, next to the top of Smoky Mountain. They'd stay down in there quite a bit in that winter range of grass.

ML: Did anyone have any sheep up there?

LC: Not that I'd know of.

ML: They kept 'em down low?

LC: Now, I don't know if anybody did. I don't know nothin' bout anybody havin' sheep up at Silers Meaders or Andrews Bald.

ML: Did they keep them near their houses?

LC: Huh?

ML: Did they keep them lower down?

LC: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, they'd just turn the sheep out at home and let them go up the mountain just wherever they wanted to go. But they wouldn't go very far most of the time. They--I don't know. I don't think I'd know of anybody puttin' any of their sheep up there on them balds.

ML: Did you have to have a big roundup of cattle in the fall, or did people just go up and find their own?

LC: Well, they just most of the time go out and sometimes they would go and all of 'em go out there and gather up all their cattle when they got ready to bring 'em in, oh, when it'd get bad weather, snowin' and things like that, and get cold. But most of the time they just went out and got their own.

ML: Did people ever steal anybody else's?

LC: Huh?

ML: Did people steal other people's cattle?



LC: No, not that I know of. No. Don't do that. That wouldn't have worked. That wouldn't have worked, now. You see, they marked 'em. The cattle, all the cattle like that except the horses and mules and stuff like that stayed up there, they were all marked on their ears. And every man that knowed his own mark, and the most of the people knowed your mark, they all knowed their mark 'cause you could ask 'em if they had seen any cattle, found any up there. They'd say, "Yeah, well I found your'n too; your'n was with mine," like that, you see. That's the way they did.

ML: Did you ever lose any to bears or panthers?

LC: Do what?

ML: Did you ever lose them to bears or panthers?

LC: No. We killed bears. They tried to. . . . Yes, it was pretty bad to kill our hogs, and the bears, it'd . . . One bad thing to kill the sheep if they could find 'em. They're bad to kill sheep.

ML: Sheep are easier to kill.

LC: Yeah, they were bad to kill sheep, but not so bad to kill the hogs. But they would kill 'em. But we didn't have very many hogs to get killed, just once in a while. Find one that killed one like last one or night before, bunch of us get out dogs and get after 'em and kill 'em if we could.

ML: Did you ever lose any to lightning?

LC: Huh?

ML: Did you ever lose them to lightning?

LC: No.

ML: Didn't have any milk sickness?

LC: No. Nope. Do you mean milk sick?

ML: Yeah.

LC: No, no I don't think there's any up there in them mountains

ML: Was there any lower down?

LC: No, not down in there anywhere that I'd ever knowed of. Now, I'd heard of being milk sick some parts of the county, but I don't know where's at not. Used to say that they had milk sick. But none of us never did have it, nor never knew of anybody on Forneys Creek or down in there anywhere havin' it.

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ML: Did they ever eat rhododendron and get sick that way?

LC: Huh?

ML: Did they ever eat rhododendrons?

LC: Eat rhododendrons?

ML: Yeah.

LC: What's that?

ML: Well, I guess laurel.

LC: The cattle?

ML: Yeah.

LC: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, they'd eat the leaves off that thing if they got hungry and didn't have any food of any kind, why they would eat the leaves off of that.

ML: But if they had grass, they wouldn't touch that?

LC: No, they would not want that. Uh-uh. They wouldn't bother that. The only time they would eat leaves off of that would be whenever they were hungry and didn't have any food or anything to eat. Then they would eat it.

ML: Did it make 'em sick?

LC: Yeah, make 'em sick, sure would.

ML: Did you ever have any caught in a late snow?

LC: Huh?

ML: Did you ever have any get caught in a snow in late spring and get frozen?

LC: We did. Dad did. He had, well, he had two young steers, two-year-olds, and a dry milk cow in nineteen and two, I believe it was. They come that big snow and froze the two yearlings but the old milk cow was standing in the branch, I believe he said. Two yearlings was laying dead on the hill there, and they was dead. There was lots of 'em frozen then, they was on Hazel Creek. That's where ours was too. They went across over Hazel Creek side of the mountain when that big snow come. They was over there. There was lots of 'em froze to death.

ML: When did you first go up to Andrews Bald? About when did you see that?

LC: When I first went to Andrews Bald?

ML: Yeah.

LC: I don't know.

ML: It was well before the Park was founded, though.

LC: Oh, Lord have mercy, yes. I'd, I was just a small boy, I guess. Why, oh, I was up there to Andrews Bald, I guess I was just about ten years old, somethin' like that, I guess.

ML: Were there any trees on it then?

LC: No. No more. . . . No, there wasn't no trees. All there was was just around the edge there were a few little around the edge of the laurel.

ML: Sarvises?

LC: And bushes like that and a few little ivy, course in the field. That was all that was in it then.

ML: No spruce or fir trees?

LC: Huh?

ML: No spruce trees or fir trees?

LC: No, no spruce trees in it. There were spruce trees on the outside of it around.

ML: Did anyone ever have a cabin up there on Andrews?

LC: Andrews Bald . . . well, no, not that I know of. Nobody except the Norwood Lumber Company. They had a, they built them a, a kind of an office, I think it was, a house of some kind back around from Andrews Bald back in kinda under Clingman's Dome, back in there. They had a. . . . It wasn't but a little piece from Andrews Bald where they had their house.

ML: So people from Hazel Creek and Forney Creek ran their cattle up those creeks and on to Silers Bald?

LC: No, they didn't run 'em.

ML: Well, the cattle got up there.

LC: Yeah, they just. . . . They didn't drive none up there. That they were takin' to Tennessee, that they sold 'em to somebody in Tennessee, then they would drive 'em up there to Siler Meaders. They wouldn't drive 'em to Andrews Bald 'cause

Andrews Bald was too far back over this way. Now over to Silers Meaders then they'd go down the Smoky Mountains, here down in Tennessee.

ML: How long was the grass on Andrews and Silers Bald?

LC: How long?

ML: Yeah. How high was it? I mean, did they keep it grazed down real close?

LC: Yeah. Whenever they was cattle up there, they kept it eat off pretty close just about like cattle and horses would out in the pasture now, but after they quit havin' cattle up there or anything, why, that grass grew up 'bout that high. I don't know what kind of grass it was, but it'd grow up knee high.

ML: Yeah. Did you ever hear any old people talking about how Andrews and Silers came to be cleared?

LC: No, I don't believe I ever did. Old man, heard Daddy and them old folks talk about Andrews Bald. Said Old Man Andrews, I don't know where he was from, was the one that cleaned up Andrews Bald and Old Man Silers cleaned up Silers Bald.

ML: When? Back in their parents' time?

LC: Way back, that was years, I don't know, probably before they was ever in these parts. I don't know. They heard it or somethin'. That's all. I don't know. I . . . Was that all you was wantin' to know was just about that, about Silers Meaders and Andrews Bald and them places like that?

ML: Yeah. Did you ever go to the Spence Place, Spence Field?

LC: Where?

ML: Spence Field. That's . . .

LC: Spence Place. Oh yes, I done that. I been there, been through there cleaning out the trail when I worked for the Park Service.

ML: Well, did you ever go up there before the Park was founded?

LC: No, I never was down there before the Park. I been down pretty close to it though. But I never was down there before that I know of. Then there was Hall Cabin back up this way where them people from Hazel Creek when they would go up there



lots of times to hunt up their cattle and bear hunt. Why, they'd go to Hall Cabin, they had a cabin down there they'd call Hall Cabin. . . . And down under Silers Bald a little way, what the name of it is Mule Lot Gap, they had a mule lot, a lot there, they called it Mule Lot, in the Mule Lot down there and right down below that just a little ways down below that on the Forney Creek side, was a Monteigh Cabin. Monteiths built that and the other people there, was more Monteiths than there was any other name, so they named that the Monteith Cabin. And I reckon the Halls must have built the other cabin down on Smoky.

ML: People ever go setting fires up there for anything?

LC: Huh?

ML: Did people ever set fires up there?

LC: On top of the mountain?

ML: Yeah.

LC: No, not that I ever heard of.

ML: Not even to burn off the leaves to get the chestnuts?

LC: No, no, never. They didn't way back then, they wouldn't go out and burn them woods. They wouldn't go up there at all. They tried to keep that, all that far out, most of 'em could except in the, long in the fall of the year after the chestnuts come down in the settlement, down in there, why, then sometimes, why, some of 'em would set out fire and let it burn over little place to pick up chestnuts. That was all. Fires set to watch 'em burn they did not that I ever heard anything about.

ML: Let's see. . . . Your hogs just ran in the woods?

LC: Yeah, the hogs just run loose just like . . .

ML: Did they mix a lot with the wild ones?

LC: Oh, Lord, yeah. That crowd of mine before I left Forneys Creek was mixed with them Russians. Ah, we had wild hogs before them Russians ever come around. We didn't know anything about 'em then. After they got them, why, they got mixed up, you know. Now there's all mixed Russian hogs. That's the way mine was when I left Forneys Creek.

ML: Did that make them harder to manage?

LC: What?

ML: Did that make them harder to take care of?

LC: Oh, they're mean, mean hogs. Well, is that all?

ML: I don't know.

LC: You don't know nothin' baout snakes I guess, do you?

ML: No, I don't know anything about snakes. Did you have to kill a lot of them?

LC: Uh-huh. Killed lots of rattlesnakes.

ML: Poor rattlesnakes, everybody's beating on them. What were the woods around Silers and Andrews like? Were they pretty open or . . .?

LC: The woods?

ML: Yeah.

LC: Oh, yeah. They was just open woods, just like anywhere most in the mountains except out at Andrews Bald, there was spruce around its rim. It was at the edge of the spruce there, it was in the spruce belt, Andrews was, especially on the Forney Creek side.

ML: Were there any tall blueberry bushes out in the middle of Andrews or Silers?

LC: Blueberries? Oh yes.

ML: Were they out on top or down in the edge of the woods?

LC: Down in the edge of the woods, yeah. Now if they were, I never did see none of them in them naked places of the fields. Never did.

ML: Practically nothing except grass up there?

LC: Grass and weeds.

ML: Were there quite a lot of weeds?

LC: Huh?

ML: Were there a lot of weeds:

LC: No, because the cattle kept them eat down, you know, and the horses and everything that stayed up there kept them weeds eat down and tore down, and the grass. . . . They eat the grass. The grass just like there was out here in a

pasture somewhere where there's cattle and horses and mules. It's all ever I ever seen of it. Now, there may have been somebody else seen more than I did about that. But that's all I ever seen up there.

ML: So, if anybody was up on Andrews, it was people from Noland Creek and thereabouts.

LC: Yeah. There's people from Noland's Creek come up Andrews Bald like that. I know some from Forney's Creek came up there too. They did. One time I remember had church down at Andrews Bald. People came from Noland's Creek and Forney's Creek too up there. Had church up there, a preacher, at Andrews Bald.

ML: Must have been quite a walk for some of them.

LC: Well, it was, but those people liked to get up there on the mountains and see it, so they come up there, went to come up there for church so they'd come hear his preachin'. Done that once or twice that I know of. But that was before the Park ever got here. I never have heard mention them doin' anything like that since.

ML: No, they just bring the tourists down from the Clingman's Dome parking lot and tell them about the flowers. Well, were the cattle, the animals really thick in these places or were they just . . .?

LC: Sick?

ML: Thick. I mean, were there lots of them, or were they just scattered bands that would come for a few days.

LC: Oh, they was scattered out. They would live way up in the mountain. Now, there'd be a good herd of 'em right around here somewhere. They would move maybe on out a mile or so up here further or they'd move back down or over that way. They'd move around. They never did come back home. They always stayed back up there on the mountain where it's good and cool. See, the flies didn't bother 'em up there. I never knowed any flies to bother the horses and cattle on the mountain way up in there.

ML: That was the important reason for keeping them up there?

LC: Yeah, well, that was why they'd like to stay up there, the cattle did. They liked to stay up there; they liked that grass, the things in the mountains there. They liked it. Course, they would come out on the tops of the mountains up there every once in a while and stay around along the tops

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maybe for a day and then walk down in the coves. They come up a bad electric storm, they didn't stay up there. They went down in the coves. Everything in the mountains except on top.

End of interview.

Transcribed by Andrea Behrman.



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